DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 049 CE 071 432

AUTHOR	Powell, Bob, Ed.; Foster, Pablo, Ed.
TITLE	Pragmatic Prospects. Developing LEA Adult Education.
INSTITUTION	Further Education Development Agency, Bristol (England).
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-907659-94-2
PUB DATE	96
NOTE	161p.; Funded by the Council of Local Education Authorities.
AVAILABLE FROM	Further Education Development Agency, Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol BS18 6RG, England, United Kingdom (12 pounds).
PUB TYPE	Books (010)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Education; Adult Learning; Consortia; Developed Nations; *Economic Development; *Educational Cooperation; *Educational Development; Educational Finance; Educational Planning; *Education Work Relationship; Foreign Countries; Lifelong Learning; Program Development; School Business Relationship; School Community Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Great Britain

ABSTRACT

This volume contains 12 articles that illustrate how local authority adult education services in Britain form practical and strategic alliances to enable learning to happen--to create new prospects pragmatically. A "Foreword" (Ursula Howard) and "Introduction" (Bob Powell) appear first. "Participation, Adult Learning and Local Authorities" (Alan Tuckett) looks at participation in adult learning as a minority activity and transforming the pattern of participation as a challenge. "Quality in Adult Education" (Geoff Bateson) advocates developing more systematic drives toward quality. "Adult Guidance in Local Authorities" (Anna Reisenberger) discusses the role of guidance. "Relating to the Community" (Pam Flynn) describes the Adult Education Service in Newcastle and its clear mission of lifelong learning and partnership and of service to schools and their communities. "Relationships in an FEFC (Further Education Funding Council)-Funded Context" (Chris Norris) describes the Surrey Youth and Adult Education Service, which has a vision of education for work, for family, for leisure, and for service to the community. "Positioning within the Local Authority (or Learning to Love and Live with Economic Development)" (Terry George) describes an adult education service that contributes to the formulation and delivery of the economic policy of a local council. "Working with the Employment Sector" (Pam Gibson) addresses Kent Adult Education Services's contribution to economic development and regeneration. "Planning at Consortium and Service Level" (Alan Noble) describes the Buckinghamshire experience. "Strategic Funding of Adult Provision at Tameside" (Catherine Moseley) focuses on establishment of a consortium with a more concerted voice sharing a commitment to adult education. "Essential Skills for Adults in Stockport" (Sue Hasty) describes the history of provision of basic skills tuition for adults, recent developments, and future options. "Women's Education in Rochdale" (Jane Black) offers examples of some work undertaken with women as learners and identifies issues, including funding, accreditation, and individual versus group approaches. "Empowerment and Democracy through Adult Learning" (Pablo Foster) offers both a vision and an agenda. (YLB)

FEDA

PRAGMATIC PROSPECTS

ED 394 049

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CE071 432

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P Toogood

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

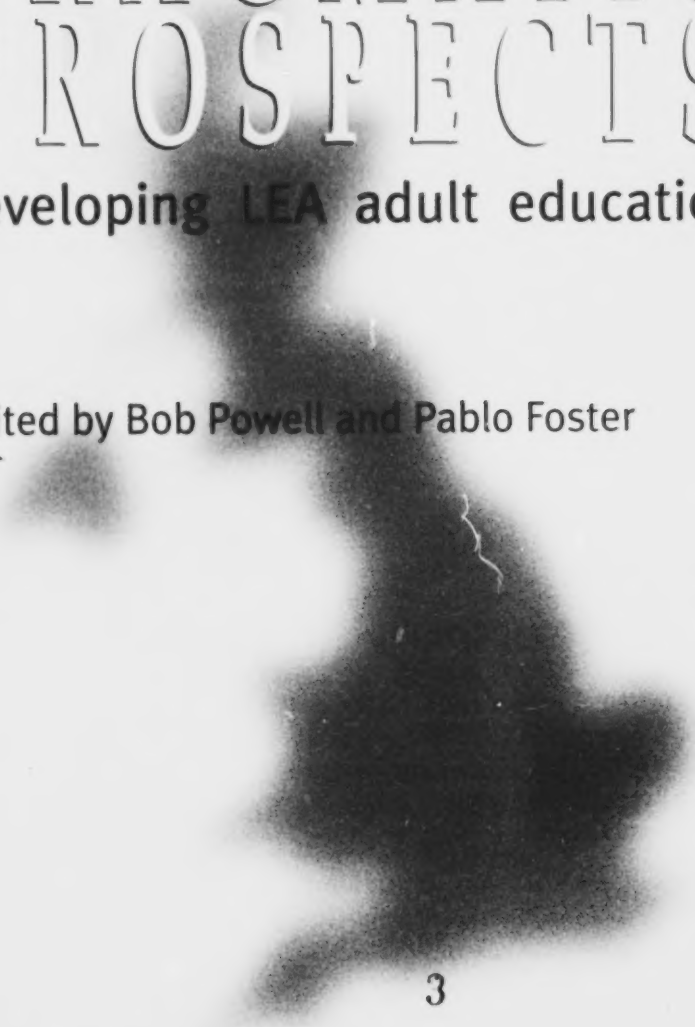
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FEDA Further Education Development Agency

PRAGMATIC PROSPECTS

Developing LEA adult education

Edited by Bob Powell and Pablo Foster



3

Published by the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), with support from the Council of Local Education Authorities (CLEA)

FEDA, Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol BS18 6RG

Tel: 01761 462503 Fax: 01761 463140

Registered with the Charity Commissioners

Printed by Henry Ling Limited, Dorchester

Cover photograph: The Basic Skills Agency, London

ISSN 0 - 907659 - 94 - 2

© 1996 FEDA

All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, electrical, chemical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright holder.

Foreword

Ursula Howard
Director, Research and Information, FEDA

The Further Education Development Agency is delighted to publish this book, the first in a series on adult learning. FEDA's role - improving the quality and the management of learning - is to address the needs of adult learners wherever they choose to learn: in FE colleges, at work, in local authority provision or voluntary organisations. We believe that cooperation and partnership between organisations is the way forward. Within this framework we have a particular role to foster the adult education services provided by and with local education authorities. In this work we are guided by the Council of Local Education Authorities (CLEA).

We hope this book will reach a wide audience. It is for everyone working in or with local authorities, from LA Chief Executives to people working in local partnerships who wish to extend the opportunities for learning in their community.

Provision for adults has been changing rapidly as the result of various education acts, local government legislation and new approaches to urban regeneration and economic development. Towering over these, in its immediate effect on the level and type of provision run by LEAs, is the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. This Act took responsibility for Further Education colleges away from local authorities, forming them instead into independent corporations, ending nearly a century of local authority run vocational education.

The Act was radical. It has imposed fundamental change in the nature and management of learning, for LEAs as much as for colleges. FE colleges are responsible for vocational education and qualifications, as defined under Schedule 2 of the Act: NVQs, GNVQs and vocational qualifications, GCSE and A level, Basic Skills and ESOL, Access to HE courses and vocationally related courses for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. LEAs have 'the duty ... to secure the provision for their area of adequate facilities for further education where these are not covered by Schedule 2 of the Act'. LEAs can also apply for funding to run Schedule Two programmes, through their local FE colleges.

Perhaps the two greatest changes which came with the 1992 Act were first, a new funding regime for Schedule Two work and a simultaneous, continued decline in funding for LEAs, not helped by the difficulty of defining 'adequate'. Secondly, the drive to accreditation embedded in the act and the Further Education Funding Council's funding methodology meant that provision could be eligible for funding under 'Schedule 2' if it could be accredited, or led learners towards fully accredited vocational qualifications. The message of many of the accounts in this book is that local authority provision has survived where it has been possible to change the structure and forms of adult education by creating working relationships with organisations who approach learning with different sets of interests and structures of accountability. For some, mainly richer, authorities, continuity has outweighed change. For others, nothing has stayed the same.

There have been many stories telling of the sad decline of local authority adult education over the last decade and a half. These are about loss of funding, about government priorities, proof of the continuing frailty of a 'sector' for which levels of provision have never been written in statute. They are accounts of the corrosive fall out for learners and potential learners of divisions between vocational and non vocational learning. The stories tell how hard it has become to offer opportunities to older people and how difficult it continues to be to tip the scales of who participates towards those who have not already benefitted from the education system. People who are already well-educated, young and middle class are most likely to engage in adult learning. Underlying the new trends and persistent social imbalance among adult learners is deep seated cultural division. This is the division which says vocational education, 'FE', is second to academic (liberal) education and young people more important than adults and results (qualifications) more important than process (learning).

All such accounts and the attitudes they describe are real. What excites me about this collection, though, is the way it exemplifies the survival of adult education as a movement as much as a public service. The

bleak financial context of local authority adult education provision is constantly present. But the book is testimony to the tactical inventiveness, renewal of ideas, commitment and sheer doggedness of local authority adult education services in growing a new crop of opportunities in drought conditions. Through loss, possible gain is grasped. Movements involve people, organisations and alliances in social interaction for change. The chapters in this book describe how practical and strategic alliances are formed between different partners to enable learning to happen. New prospects are created pragmatically.

The initiatives described in this book begin to go 'back to the future' in the best sense. The adult education of the nineteenth century, which gradually grew into institutional forms supported by the local state, was a world of fluid alliances involving local people's initiatives, churches, social, political and work-based organisations, fuelled by individuals' desire to learn and by a much more universal preoccupation with education. The adult learning which took place in the fluid and mutual structures of 19th century England was centred on the needs and commitment of working class people. There were no rigid divisions between vocational and non-vocational learning - until models began to emerge which told people that they needed this kind of learning more than that, this before that. Gradually technical education was split from learning for general self-improvement. The world of adult education which has been our historical model has been a later one, that of liberal adult education run by the Workers Education Association and the extra-mural departments, or the great pluralistic, municipal LEA services.

The challenge for the future is to recover the ambition and the creativity which that earlier mutuality offered and ensure it has the ground on which to survive. Local authorities have to be the key organisations in driving forward a movement towards adult learning for all, not least because they are local and they are accountable to local people. This volume shows how LEAs work flexibly as partners in the interests of learners and the local community in a climate of constant change. It also

shows how meaningless is the vocational/non-vocational divide. It will become even more meaningless if, as predicted, working lives become more fragmented. This will impact on social and domestic life. Chopping and changing jobs and roles will mean constant learning. Even now, there are voices, not least from employers, demanding holistic approaches to learning rather than purely narrow skills training. No single service or 'sector' can produce the goods for the future. We need a vision of co operation. Cooperation for adult learning will be essential for competitiveness and social well-being.

To find out more about FEDA'S work on adult learning and with local education authorities, contact Anna Reisenberger, Head of Programme Participation and Achievement at FEDA, Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London, SE11 5EH or telephone 0171 962 1280.

Contents

Foreword — **Ursula Howard** 3

Introduction — **Bob Powell** 11

Contexts

Participation, Adult Learning and Local Authorities — **Alan Tuckett** 25

Quality in Adult Education — **Geoff Bateson** 39

Guidance — **Anna Reisenberger** 51

Relationships

Relating to the Community — **Pam Flynn** 59

Relationships in an FEFC-funded Context — **Chris Norris** 69

Positioning within the Local Authority — **Terry George** 83

Working with the Employment Sector — **Pam Gibson** 95

Approaches

Planning at Consortium and Service Level: the Buckinghamshire Experience — **Alan Noble** 105

Strategic Funding of Adult Provision in Tameside — **Catherine Moseley** 123

Essential Skills for Adults in Stockport — **Sue Hasty** 133

Women's Education in Rochdale — **Jane Black** 143

A Vision and an Agenda

Empowerment and Democracy through Adult Learning — **Pablo Foster** 155

Introduction

Bob Powell
Educational Consultant and FEDA Associate

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This country needs to achieve a significant expansion in the amount of learning which takes place amongst the adult population. Despite being in many ways politically sidelined and fiscally battered Local Authorities still, in the mid-1990s, have an important part to play in transforming the vision of a 'learning society' into a reality. This volume presents insights into some ways in which some Authorities and their maintained Adult Education Services are addressing this challenge.

The primary motivation for increasing participation is an economic one. National Targets for Education and Training, including specific goals for 'lifetime learning', are based on the collective political and employment-sector view that there is a need to improve UK competitiveness in the world economy, and that this will only be achieved through the development of a more highly skilled workforce. This economic case for investment in and an expansion of education and training has been rehearsed in a series of policy statements and publications[1], and most recently argued in the DfEE's consultation paper on 'Lifetime Learning' issued in December 1995. All have bemoaned the British workforce's relative lack of skill and flexibility when compared to international competitors: it is 'under-educated, under-trained and under-qualified'.

The transformation of the country into a 'learning society will, as Sir Christopher Ball has argued, mean not just more learners, but different learners[2]. This raises directly the all-important question, highlighted consistently by NIACE and re-presented by Alan Tuckett in his contribution to the current volume: 'who participates?'. It is also a key concern of Local Authorities, whose raison d'etre is to provide services to all of their residents. The traditional role that LEA-sector adult education has played in acting as a 'first step back' into learning for many, and the sector's traditional success in recruiting from groups otherwise under-represented in further and higher education, reinforce in this context the vital role that adult education has to play in expanding and extending participation in learning.

There is also a growing view that narrow, labour market-related education and training is not the right solution. What is needed is a

general increase in learning activity, since people need to develop their skills, awareness and understanding, and to exercise critical judgement for their own purposes. They need information to equip them to lead increasingly complex lives in the communities in which they live. They not only need learning opportunities related to employment, but also to achieve personal fulfilment as individuals and as members of families and communities. People need education and training to sustain local regeneration, and to carry forward developments which, although often initiated under centrally- or European-funded Single Regeneration Budget or Social Fund, are essentially managed by members of the local community, including voluntary sector agencies and partnerships.

People will use skills, knowledge and competences gained in one context to enrich their contribution to other contexts. It is arguments such as these which have persuaded several leading British and international companies to invest in 'employee development programmes' whereby staff are granted an entitlement to learning opportunities which are non-work-related: also now increasingly prevalent in the public sector, perhaps the best known example of such a scheme - jointly run by management and employee representatives - is the Ford EDAP initiative. Further, an aging population increasingly dependent on a shrinking workforce - according to current projections there will be more pensioners than people economically active by the decade 2010-2019 - can itself be sustained by engagement in active learning.

The widescale development of a 'learning culture' which permits wider access to, and greater flexibility in the content of, post-school learning opportunities is therefore a move which will benefit society at large. A more educated and qualified population will produce not only an improved economic performance for Britain, but also a more tolerant society, committed to active citizenship and a more fully developed democracy. These and other social benefits which can and do derive from adult education, and a vision of how Local Authorities can exploit their role to act as midwife or mother to such creative ventures, are

discussed in Pablo Foster's piece which acts as a coda to the current volume.

The Role of Adult Education

Despite being subject to a range of pressures, Local Authority adult education is positioned to play a significant part in these developments. Its traditional strengths - identified by HMI as including 'an ability to respond quickly to identified needs, a wide variety of provision at many different levels and a range of local delivery points'[3] - can be applied to attract into learning those who may not otherwise be prepared to undertake formal study. This in turn will provide precursive growth for more vocationally- or academically-directed study: as Ministers have acknowledged, countless adult learners provide testimony to enrolment in general education classes being the first step on a learning path which gives them a confidence and a courage to move on[4].

In this context, LEA-supported adult education might be seen to have an expanded role. It will need to continue to provide an educational focus for people's leisure-time and recreational activities, but is also a vital route for those who do not see participation in qualification-bearing study as an immediate option or their principal goal. Adult education may, indeed, be the primary mechanism through which an expansion in learning is achieved. To these ends, Local Authorities need to regard adult education in developmental terms, and seek to employ their responsibilities and powers to provide ways in which the population base which is involved in constructive learning activity can be expanded.

LEA Adult Education: Difficulties, Duties and Funding

The vision announced above is not, however, one which can be achieved easily - especially in the current context. Since April 1993 certain historic duties of LEAs have been transferred to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). It is this body which is now charged with securing - and

armed with the budget to secure - provision of a range of so-called 'Schedule 2' education opportunities: qualification-bearing vocational and academic courses, adult basic education (literacy and numeracy), English for Speakers of Other Languages and certain 'Access', 'return-to-learn' and special needs programmes. The creation of FEFC, and its 'Schedule 2' remit, has meant a clear national priority focus on certificated provision and on programmes with clear progression into qualification-related courses. While LEA-sector Services can - and do - access FEFC funding, they do so as 'external' institutions, relaying bids through a 'sponsoring' organisation within the FE sector. This has, not least, had the effect of potentially marginalising LEA-sector provision; further, as Chris Norris explains in his account of the manoeuvring Surrey Youth and Adult Education Service has felt obliged to undertake, much energy has had to be diverted into forging and sustaining relationships, and resources have had to be channelled into supporting and reporting on FEFC-funded activity.

Local Education Authorities in England - and in Wales - however retain a clear statutory duty to secure 'adequate provision' of all other further education which falls outside the FEFC remit. While this includes the traditional 'non-vocational' courses which have historically defined adult education, the LEA duty is not limited to 'leisure and pleasure' provision. Increasingly, LEA-maintained services are developing broad portfolios of work, funded from a range of sources and often designed to complement or support corporate Local Authority strategies. Articles in this volume by Terry George and Pam Gibson show how adult education services need to be - and are - taken seriously as deliverers of programmes, opportunities and services which respond directly to corporate priorities and employment-sector needs; Catherine Moseley and Sue Hasty highlight ways in which disadvantaged members of local communities can be best served by Local Authority-managed provision; Jane Black focuses on the ways in which women can be targeted into taking first steps back into learning after school, or after a career break.

A flavour of the work undertaken by LEA-sector adult education, and the positive outcomes which result from participation, is given in HMI's recently published review of 1994/95:

- Overall, students were extending their knowledge and understanding of both familiar and new subjects, developing sound practical and creative skills, resulting in the production of high-quality artefacts, acquiring key competences for enhancing their employment prospects and learning to approach crucial turning-points in their lives, such as parenthood or retirement, with a confidence gained by increased awareness of what these new roles might demand of them. In the best Return to Study and Access classes, work was intellectually demanding and students rose successfully to the challenge, developing keen critical, research and analytical skills and the ability to marshall and sustain an argument convincingly.
- In the main, adults were achieving an impressive and diverse range of outcomes as a result of their involvement in LEA adult education. Men who had never cooked before were turning their hand to complicated recipes; students with learning difficulties had acquired the poise and control to perform an extract from a Shakespeare play; language students used their newly acquired linguistic competence for their jobs, for their holidays or for communicating with friends and family. Machine knitters, embroiderers, potters and painters produced articles for sale or for exhibition; lace-making or heirloom-quilt students developed their skills whilst sustaining traditional crafts. Musicians and actors took the opportunity to demonstrate their newly-developed talents in performance. In family literacy programmes, parents developed the skills and confidence to help their children with their reading and number work, working alongside them as well as further.extending their own

> learning in separate provision. Students on Basic Skills at Work programmes were rapidly building up their oral and written skills as well as their confidence, whilst employers confirmed that those who had followed such programmes now had the capacity to undertake more complex tasks in the workplace.[5]

With such benefits to be gained it is sad indeed, and fundamentally shortsighted, that financial support of adult education seems to be on the wane. A survey on behalf of NATFHE[6] undertaken in the year when LEA budgets for further education were disaggregated to establish base-line funding for FEFC found that while 30% of local budgets had grown between 1992/93 and 1993/94, in nearly two-thirds of Authorities adult education budgets were cut in absolute terms. A more recent NIACE survey[7] reported that 57.5% of Local Authorities had experienced adult education budget reductions in 1995/96; where cuts had not been made, budgets had been sustained 'because local politicians have fought hard for recognition of adult learning's contribution to the health and welfare of local communities, and because officers and practitioners have been effective in seeking other sources of funding'. Such trends must be reversed if the learning society is to be forged. Local Authorities retain clear discretionary scope to sustain - or even expand - current expenditure, if only they recognise the advantages which can ensue from so doing. One of the clear indications from accounts in this volume, and from wider practice, is that adult education services can 'lever in' additional, external funding successfully provided the base-line infrastructure is secured by Local Authority budget-making.

Trends in LEA Adult Education Policy

Notwithstanding the differing ways in which individual Local Authorities interpret their statutory duties regarding adult education, and the extent to which they feel able to maintain traditionally slim budgets, certain priorities are evident. Influential papers by the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education and the former Further

Education Unit[8] (now FEDA) have prompted a number of LEAs to prepare overt statements of what might be regarded as 'adequate provision' in the local context: the Newcastle approach is described in Pam Flynn's contribution to the current volume. Many Local Authorities have also published an Adult Education Service Charter which outlines standards of provision to which community residents will be entitled. 1994 FEU research[9] highlighted the emphasis placed by LEAs on a group of common adult education policy concerns:

- the need for comprehensive information on the range of provision available, together with impartial advice and guidance on what learning opportunities might be appropriate for an individual or group of individuals
- strong emphasis on equality of opportunity and treatment, often supplemented by reference to anti-discriminatory policies and practice
- a particular focus on redressing disadvantage and encouraging participation from traditional non-learners (usually through targeting identified 'priority groups')
- collaborative, inter-agency approaches to needs identification, planning and provision
- information on, and/or the provision of opportunities for progression into further learning
- delivery of a quality learning experience and service to users
- easy accessibility to provision, especially in respect of geographical location
- the availability of a range of learner support services, both financial and practical.

Other factors reported as carrying high priority in LEA policies on adult education include:

- learner involvement in decisions about what is provided, how it is provided, and the effectiveness of provision

- the promotion of adults as independent learners, responsible for their own development and empowered to make choices
- an explicit espousal of differentiation to respond to the particular learning needs of individuals and groups of learners
- the need for a wide and varied range of curricular opportunities, so that provision is available in response to individual learning needs, including the desire to progress to 'higher' levels of study
- the flexibility of provision, so that what is on offer is relevant to, and easily accessed by adults whose other commitments may compromise their freedom to be active learners
- opportunities for staff development and inter-agency networking, which are seen as necessary to ensure high quality teaching and learning.

Adult Education Principles

These observations can be distilled into a set of generic principles underpinning much Local Authority sector provision for adults, whether it be 'Non-Schedule 2' or 'Schedule 2', funded from within LEA budgets or external sources such as FEFC, ESF, Section 11, SRB. Local Authority adult education needs to be:

(a) grounded in needs analysis

services should be able to identify , analyse and respond to specific learning needs of residents systematically, especially those who have traditionally been 'untouched' by adult education provision. This may in turn occasion providers in more comprehensive liaison/collaboration with community organisations, Council services, voluntary sector agencies and community groups

(b) *wideranging in its curriculum offer, and thus responsive to identified needs and relevant to learners*

adult education services should offer a diverse curriculum, with at a minimum the scope to run a programme in each aspect of general adult education (languages; physical; creative etc) and, perhaps, for targeted groups. Adult education has traditionally targeted the individual, as opposed to groups: providers should be able to demonstrate a preparedness to make contact with existing community groups with a view to identifying and responding to group learning needs

(c) *available in modes and at times which are likely to increase accessibility*

provision needs to be offered at different times of the day, in increasingly flexible ways (eg. one-day courses; short courses; through drop-in workshops; via open learning, distance learning and resource-based learning approaches), and at non-traditional times (eg. weekends, holiday periods)

(d) *accessible to local communities*

learning opportunities should be offered in venues which are easily accessed by local residents, and in the workplace; this is likely to require providers to work closely with a range of agencies, including schools, hospitals, other Local Authority Services and community associations and voluntary sector organisations

(e) *designed to attract participation from all sectors of the resident population, and reflect principles of equity of opportunity*

service providers should operate within a clear equal opportunities policy, and monitor the extent to which adult education students represent all sectors of the local community; there should be scope to take prompt action to offset any identified instances of under-

representation, and to target priority clients as identified by the Local Authority. Providers might also be expected to demonstrate an ability to attract 'first time users' of adult education

(f) of demonstrably high quality

service providers should be expected to have in place internal quality assurance processes which both demonstrate student satisfaction with the service provided, and identify areas for improvement

(g) focused on meaningful outcomes for students

all programmes should carry a clearly articulated statement of intended learning outcome, and there should be regular assessment of the achievement of stated outcomes; service providers should be in a position to offer accreditation where it is requested

(h) part of a continuum of opportunities providing clear progression routes for learners

services should be able to identify progression routes - lateral and vertical - to other forms of learning, both within their own organisation and elsewhere, and provide appropriate advice and guidance on future options to adult education students.

Pragmatism in Adult Education: a value base

The contributions to this volume indicate, in various ways, the manner in which Local Authority adult education can act in accordance with these principles. Recent political, financial and administrative pressures - resulting both from national government policy and corporate Local Authority strategies - mean increasingly that adult education service providers are having to act responsively and flexibly to sustain and

develop provision. But these are recognised strengths of the profession, and ones which are evidently still practised to great effect.

What is clear from the articles which follow is that, in a context of increasing emphasis on 'the marketplace', overt accountability and enhanced attention to customer needs, LEA-sector adult education services are both willing and able to take pragmatic steps to secure their viability, and so preserve and sustain the service offered to the local community. The efforts necessary to enhance the effectiveness of provision, to secure alternative funding and to prove and improve the quality of provision are, as Alan Noble's account of the introduction of strategic planning in Buckinghamshire demonstrates, in themselves likely to be positive for the well-being of the service.

What is also clear is that all the contributors to this volume share, with other professionals in the adult education sector, a firm and abiding commitment to breaking down barriers to study, and promoting opportunities and incentives for more people, from more groups in our diverse society, to commit themselves to learning. All support creation of a 'learning society'. Those of us working to secure a broad range of provision for adult learners in the Local Authority sector believe that all adult education both should and can be:

- responsive to identifiable needs, both of individuals and of communities
- empowering of its clients and client groups, giving them skills, understanding and opportunity to work to redress the deleterious consequences of social and economic disadvantage
- equitable, giving opportunity to all both to participate in learning and to gain success from participation
- restorative, in that it addresses personal and social as well as economic needs
- flexible and readily accessible

- affordable and non-exclusive
- sensitive to the adult nature of (actual and potential) clients
- based on democratic principles and operation, including the involvement of users in programme management.

This volume provides but some insights into how these values inform current Local Authority adult education practice.

Notes

1 *For a summary, see NIACE's 1993 discussion document The Learning Imperative.*

2 *A phrase initially used in an argument for an expansion in higher education (see Aim Higher: Widening Access to Higher Education Interim Report, RSA, October 1989 and More Means Different: Widening Access to Higher Education Final Report, RSA, May 1990) but nonetheless pertinent to any move to expand the uptake of further education and training, including that specifically targeted at adults.*

3 *See Education Observed: Education for Adults, A Review by HMI, HMSO (London), 1991.*

4 *See, for example, the transcript of the then Under-Secretary of State's address to a 1995 Adult Learners' Week Conference, presented as 'Lifelong Learning: A Framework for Discussion', Tim Boswell MP, in Adults Learning, vol 6, no 9 (May, 1995), pp 258-263.*

5 *From Adult Education and Youth Work within Local Education Authorities: A Review of the Year 1994/95; OFSTED (London), 1996.*

6 *Adult Education: A Survey Report, by Bob Powell; NATFHE (London), 1993.*

7 *Findings reported in 'Choice, diversity and no choice', a four-page supplement for Adult Learners' Week 1995, Education, 12 May 1995.*

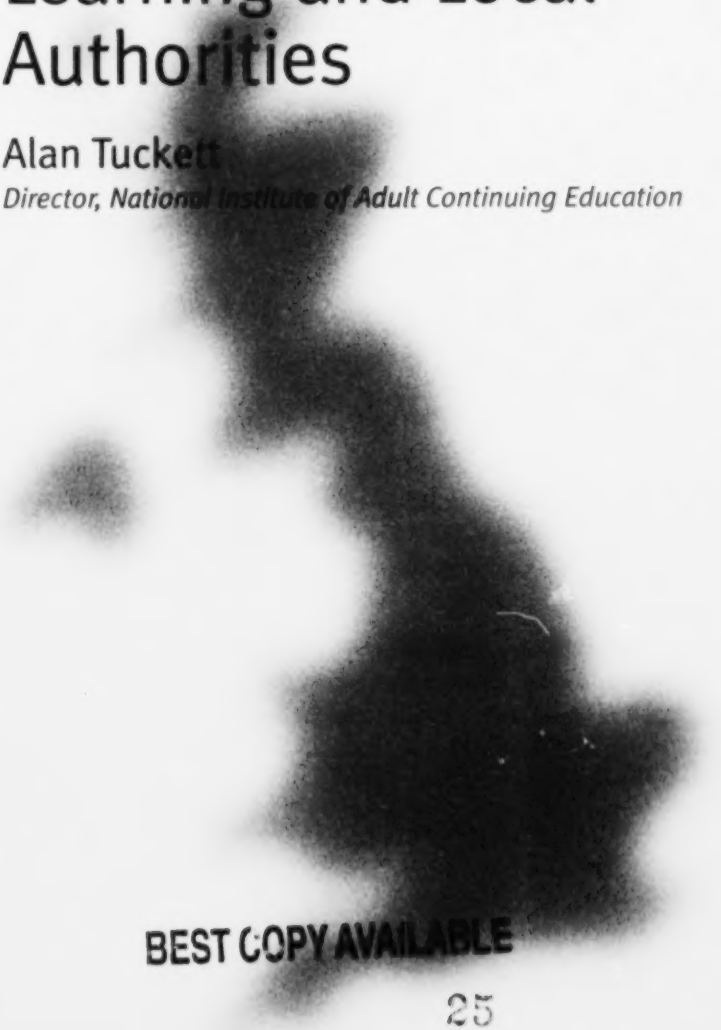
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

8 *Respectively "Securing Adequate Facilities": Planning for the Education of Adults, UDACE, 1988 and Adequate Provision for Adult Learners: A Framework, FEU, 1994.*

9 *Securing Adequate Provision for Adult Learners; FEU, 1994.*

Participation, Adult Learning and Local Authorities

Alan Tuckett
Director, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Local Authorities have been the key to adult participation in learning after school since the whisky tax of the late nineteenth century, but especially since the 1919 Report of the Ministry of Reconstructions's Board of Adult Education, which recognised the important role they play. Between the wars local opportunities can be, crudely, divided into four types of study:

- liberal and academic, largely undertaken by university extra-mural departments and the Workers Educational Association, at least outside the main cities
- vocational, the 'night school' that lingers evocatively in popular speech
- courses for women, designed to make tight family budgets stretch further
- physical jerks for men to diminish any latent revolutionary zeal.

The audience assumed in all four types of programme was the self-improving poor.

This is, of course, a caricature ... but it is interesting to see how the sediment of courses survive. When I took over at Clapham-Battersea Adult Education Institute in ILEA the 1981 Monday evening programme at the Old Chesterton building was almost identical to that offered in 1926.

The growth of leisure and cheap holidays abroad changed the curriculum and the clientele dramatically in the 1950s and 1960s, so that ILEA's 1969 social survey of the student body in adult education institutes revealed that only 4% of participants were working class, against an inner London resident working class population of 39%.

The Russell Report, commissioned in 1969 by a Labour government but reporting to Margaret Thatcher as Secretary of State, identified a range of 'disadvantaged' groups whose learning needs might be met by adult education. Russell made the case for a very modest (too modest) increase

in funding to develop the work. The report also provides an interesting illustration of a recurrent feature of policy development in work with adults, in that it proposed a national strategy which was not accepted by central government. Yet, because Local Education Authorities recognised the importance of the agenda set by Russell, programmes of basic skills, provision of English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL), for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, Access and return-to-study courses thrive to this day. Indeed many are at the heart of the curriculum removed from local government, and funded as national priorities, after the 1992 FHE Act.

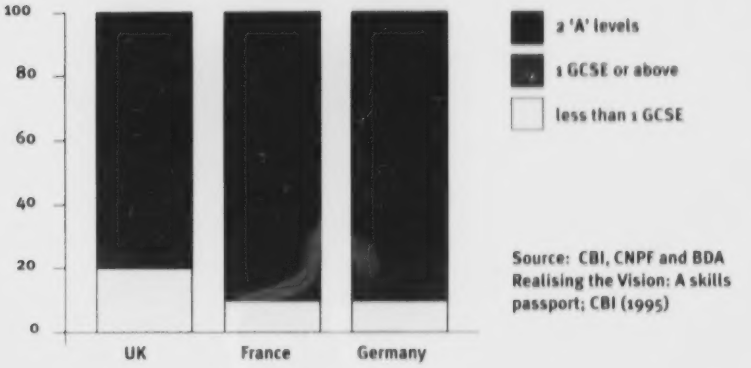
Adult Learning for All?

Despite the growth of provision, and the widespread recognition from the late 1980s that Britain needed to take active measures to construct a learning society for all its adults, participation in adult learning remains a minority activity.

Current central government policy focuses primarily on the economic case for lifelong learning, which is now broadly accepted by all (DfEE, 1995). In an increasingly global economy there is a marked economic advantage for societies with skilled, adaptable and learning workforces. Yet, as the Confederation of British Industry notes, 'despite recent improvements, the UK was ranked 24th by the World Economic Forum for the quality of its people's skills' (CBI,1995). This is not because of a shortage of skills amongst the best qualified sectors of the population, but because 'its tail of education and training under-performance is striking' (CBI,1995).

The UK's performance at producing higher-level students, stimulated by a stream of Government initiatives from the 1963 Robbins Report onwards, is comparable to its competitor nations. However, at the lower levels the UK fails to match other countries' abilities to produce large numbers of medium-skilled people. Too many students in the UK leave school with low-level or no qualifications (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: HIGHEST QUALIFICATION LEVELS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS UK, FRANCE AND GERMANY, 1993



Source: CBI, CNPF and BDA Realising the Vision: A skills passport; CBI (1995)

In some ways our current crisis is the product of the efficiency of an education and industrial training system well adapted to the needs of a Fordist economy and an empire. Large-scale mass production industry needed only small numbers of people with thinking, planning and management skills. Most people traded manual labour for a wage, and hung up their brains when they hung up their hat. A similar division of labour was involved in managing an empire. The major difference between the empire and economies built on mass manufacturing was that only in the latter were wages high enough for workers to contribute to economic growth by buying the consumer goods they produced in large numbers.

The education system played an effective part in Fordism by selecting elites to be educated to high levels of general and specific skill, and by leaving most people with a sense that 'education is for other people' (McGivney, 1990). Changes in demand from the labour market could be adjusted by adapting the skills developed among young labour market entrants. As a result there was, in Britain at least, little experience of widespread reskilling of the bulk of the adult workforce. Training and education opportunities tended to concentrate on offering more to those

who already enjoyed extensive initial education; what there was was mainly given to senior staff and, overwhelmingly, to men.

Continuing inconsistency in participation: recent data

The legacy of the past is striking. Over the last 15 years the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education has surveyed large and representative samples of the complete adult population to discover their own sense of their involvement in any kind of learning as adults. This research has built on earlier work by the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE 1982; NIACE 1990; Sargant 1991; Sargant 1993; NIACE 1994), while the Training Agency (1989) and the Employment Department (Park, 1994) have undertaken similar work with people of working age.

The findings of all these surveys are remarkably consistent - you are more likely to be offered opportunities to learn as an adult, and you are more likely to take them up, if you are young, middle class and you enjoyed an extended initial education. The NIACE 1994 survey, undertaken by MORI, illustrates the picture clearly. 4,000 adults were asked to identify any kind of learning, education or training, through formal or informal study, they were currently pursuing:

TABLE 1: WHO PARICIPATES? - OVERALL *(Percentages)*

	Studying now	In the last 3 Years	More than 3 years ago	Never since school
Overall	10	14	23	52
Men	10	15	27	48
Women	10	14	20	56

The evidence that slightly larger numbers of men participate is worth noting, given that women outnumber men by three to one in local adult education provision. Men take disproportionately large shares of employer-funded opportunities, and are strongly represented in courses leading to qualifications. When these numbers are broken down by social class they show just how effective we have been in concentrating educational opportunities for adults on the middle classes:

TABLE 2: WHO PARICIPATES? - SOCIAL CLASS *(Percentages)*

	Studying now	In the last 3 Years	More than 3 years ago	Never since school
AB	14	20	32	33
C1	15	17	28	40
C2	7	15	22	56
DE	5	9	15	70

The key figures in Table 2 are those relating to the numbers of non-participants in social groups C2, D and E, and the small numbers of current and recent students. The effects of initial education on future participation patterns are similarly sharp, as illustrated in Table 3.

TABLE 3: WHO PARICIPATES? - AGE LEFT FULL TIME EDUCATION *(Percentages)*

	Studying now	In the last 3 Years	More than 3 years ago	Never since school
Under 16	3	7	21	69
16-17	9	19	23	48
18+	11	23	31	34

Things are changing, however. Table 4 demonstrates that each age cohort has a larger proportion of current and recent participants than its elders. However, this change is nothing like sharp enough. Even amongst the youngest age groups some 40 percent have undertaken no active learning since school.

TABLE 4: WHO PARICIPATES? - AGE *(Percentages)*

	Studying now	In the last 3 Years	More than 3 years ago	Never since school
17-24	29	21	8	40
25-34	10	21	25	43
35-44	7	17	28	48
45-54	6	15	25	54
55-64	5	9	30	56
65+	3	3	23	70

Earlier research for NIACE, by Naomi Sargant, showed that the study experience of Britain's ethnic minority communities is different from the pattern above. Whatever the economic circumstances, prior education or occupational status, the majority of people from minority ethnic groups participate at levels comparable with professional and managerial groups in the wider community. The single exception to this in the groups surveyed was the Bangladeshi community, which had much less awareness of learning opportunities than other groups and also much less access to initial education. This factor impacts upon the Indian sub-continent figures in Table 5:

TABLE 5: WHO PARICIPATES? - MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS				*(Percentages)*
	Chinese	African	Caribbean	Indian sub-continent
Studying now	19	36	21	13
In last 3 years	20	24	22	12
More than 3 years ago	10	12	13	6
Never since school	51	28	44	69
Never	5	11	19	62

Britain's black communities seem, from the figures, convinced enough by the potential advantages of education to invest in their own continuing learning. The evidence from the NIACE study suggests, however, that they are markedly less likely than the white community to get workbased opportunities to study or train, and less likely to gain employment or earnings benefits from their skills (Sargant, 1993). Stella Dadzie's contemporary study showed that 85% of black professionals with qualifications gained overseas were unemployed, and that of those in work, few were employed at a level to exploit their skills (Dadzie, 1993).

The recognition of the benefits of learning that led to the formulation of National Targets for Education and Training has, nevertheless, been accompanied by an increasing popular understanding that skills and qualifications do matter - at least amongst those already convinced that learning is a good thing.

Over the 15 years of ACACE/NIACE surveys there has been a significant increase in people identifying career-related reasons for wanting to study, and an increase, too, in the proportion wanting accreditation. This trend will have been accentuated by the change in the pattern of provision of adult learning opportunities deriving from the

1992 Further and Higher Education Act. The growth in academic and vocational further education following the Act has led to a major expansion of adult learners taking courses in colleges and LEA centres, at a time when uncertificated provision in Local Education Authorities has been curtailed in many places.

These changes have not been without a price. For older people in particular there has been a recent dramatic drop in participation, probably as a result of the altered balance of learning opportunities:

Table 6: Older People's Participation		*(Percentages)*
People Aged 65+	1990	1994
Studying now	6	3
Studying in the last 3 years	9	3

Table 6 illustrates clearly that there must be more than a single focus to a campaign for a learning society. Although some people in their sixties and seventies will want to continue to engage in the paid economy, and to maintain their learning skills to keep up, the majority will seek learning - if at all - for other purposes. The NIACE surveys show, too, that future study intentions are affected by current levels of participation (see Table 7).

TABLE 7: FUTURE STUDY INTENTIONS				(Percentages)
Current Study Status	Very likely	Fairly likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely
Overall	15	18	20	44
Currently	52	21	12	9
Recently	33	33	20	12
In the past	10	21	28	37
Never	5	11	19	62

More than four in five of those who say they have done no studying since school see little or no prospect of taking up learning opportunities in the future.

Continuing challenges

The quantitative data on adult participation produces a clear picture of a society where no more than a third of the community engage regularly in active purposeful learning; a third might be persuaded to participate, given proper arrangements; but a third of the population are convinced learning has little to offer them.

The challenge posed by these participation rates and attitudes is a major one. In particular it is vital to develop strategies for each of the four groups summarised in Figure 2. The economic case for adult learning is only part of the story. As the recent European White Paper 'Teaching and Learning: Towards a Learning Society' recognises, adult learning also has an important role to play in combatting social exclusion, in fostering active, critical citizenship, and in supporting people in achieving personal fulfilment. Yet current programmes offer little to the group in the bottom right hand corner of Figure 2:

Figure 2: Educational Segmentation	
Extended initial education Recent or current adult learning	No post-compulsory education Recent or current adult learning
Extended initial education No recent or current adult learning	No post-compulsory education No recent or current adult learning

For Local Authorities, reeling from a continuing pressure from central government to reduce costs yet retaining extensive statutory duties as well as community-focused political goals, the challenges are real. At their best Local Authorities create sensitive, diverse and imaginative services which seek to be accessible to the full range of their communities, with guidance available for individuals and groups seeking advice on a possible learning career. They support clear progression routes to education, work or community activity, with opportunities for prior learning to be assessed and accredited. They offer financial support for individuals, to complement that from the state, employers and from individuals themselves.

Local Authorities also build on a wide network of internal and external partnership with:

- economic development units to foster urban and rural regeneration
- health and social services departments to support Community Care programmes
- housing departments to support tenants' groups

- voluntary bodies and caring agencies to prolong active citizenship among older people
- a range of public and private sector bodies, to develop and implement community development strategies
- effective liaison with TECs, employers, and training providers
- partnerships in schools
- partnerships to create electronic village halls
- partnerships to create Learning Cities.

And of course there are partnerships with the FEFCs and their colleges to provide 'Schedule 2' courses in community settings.

Examples of creative work in Local Authorities can be found in all these areas, much of it directly targeted towards providing education for excluded groups. Yet few would offer a wide range, and what is most distinctive about Local Authority provision for adults is its patchiness. It still remains true that the most important factor affecting the learning opportunities available to you is where you live.

The need for creativity

Local government faces a serious challenge over its provision of adult learning opportunities. Faced with tight budgets, substantially decentralised to schools, Local Authorities can maintain a token commitment to liberal education, on the margins of their education budgets - they can in effect choose to make little contribution to transforming the pattern of participation. Alternatively, they can locate adult learning in leisure or library services, or in economic development departments - highlighting different dimensions of the work. Or they can adopt a comprehensive and strategic approach which recognises the power of adult education as a tool for sustaining the well-being of their communities.

Whatever the administrative arrangements adopted, the real need is for an injection of the creativity, the social inventiveness that led to the flowering of municipal services in the last decade of the nineteenth century. We need recovery of civic pride, and above all new forms of association between individuals, groups and the local state to ensure that a third of the population is not abandoned whilst the rest enjoy the fruits of a learning society. The experience of Castleford Women's Centre, of FORD EDAP, of Strathcona Theatre Company, of the residential colleges and of the University of the Valleys suggest there is no shortage of will to share in this task - and no shortage of Local Authority support, even where the lead agent is an external partner. But to generalise these marvellous concerns, Local Authorities must be persuaded to remodel themselves as learning authorities dedicated to supporting all their people in learning for personal fulfilment, community development and economic prosperity.

References

Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (1982)
Adults - Their Educational Experience and Needs; ACACE

Confederation of British Industry (1995)
Realising The Vision: A skills passport; CBI

Dadzie, Stella (1993)
Survey of Numbers of Black Adults with Professional Qualifications Gained Overseas; NIACE

Department for Education and Employment (1995)
Lifetime Learning: A consultation document; DfEE

Department of Education (1963)
Higher Education ('The Robbins Report'); HMSO

Department of Education and Science (1971)
Adult Education: A Plan For Development ('The Russell Report'); HMSO

McGivney, Veronica (1990)
Education's for Other People: Access to Education for Non-participant Adults; NIACE

Ministry of Reconstruction (1919)
The Final Report of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction 1918-19 ('The 1919 Report')

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (1994)
What Price The Learning Society?; NIACE

Park, Alison (1994)
Individual Commitment to Learning: Individuals' Attitudes; Employment Department

Sargant, Naomi (1991)
Learning and 'Leisure'; NIACE

Sargant, Naomi (1993)
Learning for a Purpose:Participation in education and training by adults from ethnic minorities; NIACE

Training Agency (1989)
Training in Britain; TA

Quality in Adult Education

Geoff Bateson

Post-16 Development and Support Officer, Birmingham Education Department

39

Concern with the quality of Local Authority adult education services is not new. Practitioners have always prided themselves on the relevance, responsiveness and quality of the learning opportunities organised, and have usually had this belief confirmed by polls, surveys and inspections. The ensuring of this quality has, however, traditionally relied upon informal and idiosyncratic approaches. There have been two recent substantial changes to this pattern.

One change has been the attention given to the concept of quality itself. If we are to deliver quality - are we sure that we know what we mean by it? Quality is a contested concept (Pollitt, 1990) with no sharp and unified definition. There have been significant writings from a number of quality 'gurus' in recent times, much of their work receiving wide dissemination through DTI-sponsored initiatives and frequent media exposure. But this has been accompanied by the promotion of a correspondingly wide range of definitions: 'fitness for purpose' (Juran); 'satisfying (or even delighting) the customer' (Oakland); 'conformance to requirements' (Crosby); a service which is 'uniformly dependable, at low cost, and suited to the market' (Deming); 'defined in terms of customer perceptions' (Peters). There has been so much written about quality over the last ten years that the problem is not one of a lack of information, but one of too much.

The second change has been that quality has moved onto a much more formal organisational agenda. Institutional approaches to quality have been given a much stronger national profile. At the same time it remains the responsibility of each organisation to determine the approach to quality that best suits its own purpose. For adult education services such choices are being made with reference to a number of external assessment and quality frameworks. The quality map for LEA adult education services currently has an increasing number of external major overlays, including:

- Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspection criteria
- OFSTED inspection criteria

- Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark
- Investors in People Awards
- expectations of Awarding Bodies
- contractual quality assurance requirements of funders such as Training and Enterprise Councils.

Work is being undertaken at a number of levels to harmonise these into unified frameworks that are transparent to a variety of underlying expectations. If these external frameworks remain the only determinants of quality, however, then opportunities are lost to stress the requirements of the Local Authority itself. Quality, for Local Authority services, implies some relationship to the implementation of agreed policies and strategies. Under the impact of the 1990s' drive towards charters and statements of service, accompanied sometimes by 'internal contracting' and service level agreements, many Local Authorities are developing their own corporate approaches to quality.

Organisational Approaches to Quality

For a number of reasons, therefore, quality has become the buzz word, the banner, the heading behind which so much other activity takes place. With so much enthusiasm for quality it becomes difficult to suggest that not all of this activity might be productive.

Within this shifting context there are a number of different organisational approaches that can be taken. Some are quite bureaucratic, requiring the formulation of quality manuals and the documentation of all standard processes. Some rely upon continual monitoring, the completion of regular proformas and the highlighting of defaults from accepted standards. Other approaches stress cultural change so that a service is at all times inspection-ready, and constantly seeking ways to improve upon current performance. Still others look for ways of engaging all staff in meaningful ways that allow them to take quality assurance seriously rather than see it as a set of mechanisms to

be gone through to satisfy others. Within this spectrum some people may become ardent protagonists for one particular approach, whilst others argue for the balancing of a range of different approaches.

Within all of this two clear dimensions to quality can be identified:

(a) the 'subjective' dimension, concerned with the extent to which the service satisfies peoples' requirements

(b) the 'technical' dimension, concerned with the extent to which the service conforms to a set of standards or to a specification.

The interaction between these two dimensions is increasing, and is increasingly complex. This means that coherence in approach is best ensured when Services adopt a combination of a clear perspective, based on a wide set of internal service policy statements and in recognition of external quality frameworks.

'Subjectivity'

The original approach taken within adult education services held the quality of the interpersonal learning interaction itself to be at the core. Within such a framework the important measures have been students' course evaluations and a focus on the direct observation of the learning and teaching processes. Within this 'subjective' approach the widening focus on quality in public services has brought with it a need to address more systematically the quality of a broad range of interactions between the provider and recipient of a service (AMA, 1992). Conceptually this broader perspective had already been advocated by Donadebian (1980), who suggested that public services included more than processes, and that quality needed also to focus on outcomes and structures. Stewart and Walsh (1989) took the same line in making a distinction between service effectiveness, service relationships and service organisation. The debates about the quality of adult learning have thus widened away from a concern predominantly with student evaluation to include

measures for the management of the service, the planning of the service and the quality of employment for those delivering the service.

'Objectivity'

The alternative 'objective' approach, stressing conformance to standard, demands that specifications be drawn up for numerous aspects of the service. The peak of this approach came several years ago, with services being disaggregated into fragments and a number of performance measures devised to indicate the quality of those fragments. An initial response to this was to argue that interactions within public services were not easily measured or expressed in terms of criteria (Walsh, 1991). More recently, attempts have been made to capture these interactions within quality assessment frameworks which list the disaggregated characteristics of high quality learning and teaching systems.

Countering the argument that adult learning is an holistic activity that cannot be divided into separate parts, such approaches do allow a way of looking at the service as built up from a number of building blocks such as management, interactions, communications, costings and so on. These categories can be set against the phases of pre-entry, threshold/induction, on-programme learning, on-programme support, and achievement/exit. This then gives a grid for logging the quality not of the whole service at once, but of its constituent parts. The difficulty with this is the need to remember that not only must each stage or element be of high quality, but that the separate elements must continue to join up in ways that produce an overall quality experience for participants.

This monitoring-of-standards approach was given some momentum by the onset, within Local Authorities, of a 'charter' orientation placing particular emphasis on:

- guaranteed standards of service for responding to telephone calls, letters, complaints, requests for information etc

- better application and reception processes, with frontline staff trained in customer care
- public statements about service level and service effectiveness.

Measuring such aspects of the service has, in many cases, become the basis of new sets of paperwork, new staff appointments and a whole range of staff training.

A jigsaw

At the end of all of these various developments adult education services are currently faced with a jigsaw of a developmental agenda in which different services may have different 'quality' pieces securely in place, but few can claim to have completed the whole picture. For many services more remains to be done on:

- improved threshold services to those seeking reliable course information and impartial guidance
- better partnerships amongst providers, leading to a more coherent curriculum offer
- improved learner support in its many forms, across all parts of the service
- robust information systems that can be used as a reliable basis for decision making
- resource monitoring systems, and strategies for improving the quality of learning environments
- increased achievements, in real terms, for learners - with less wastage of time, energy and money
- improved communications between staff, and more focused investment in them as a key resource
- consistent implementation of policies that can be seen to be operating for the benefit of learners.

The list could go on quite a bit further.

Rather than addressing this quality agenda as a disconnected set of tasks to be 'done', however, the whole quality enterprise needs to be underpinned by manageable, cost effective systems that enable everyone to feel comfortable that real progress is systematically being made in sustaining and developing service quality. Improvements can always be made on an ad hoc basis, even in difficult financial environments, but this is a long way from improving the quality of provision within a framework that is clearly thought-through, is reliable and robust in its application, and is adequately resourced and managed.

An understanding of adult education contexts and characteristics

Some Authorities have remained direct providers of adult learning services, others have taken on a more enabling role. Whatever the precise organisational arrangements, and whatever overall approach to quality is taken, LEAs continue to have a statutory responsibility for ensuring that the service for which they are responsible can be assured as being of high quality (DfE, 1993).

Local Authority adult education services have a number of features which, whilst not unique to them alone nor present in all services, regularly reoccur with varying degrees of emphasis and which have an impact on this assuring of quality:

- the geographical area served is often large and complex
- the service is rarely a self-contained business, but is part of a set of interdepartmental and interagency relationships
- the service operates to its own Strategic Plan, but often within a broader set of Authority-wide strategic objectives
- adult education services have adopted from the democratic role of Local Authorities a view of communities as more than customers

- adult education, like other Local Authority frontline services, is open to shifts of power through the actions of the electorate
- such services are also open to a wide set of internal and external influences concerned with what is worth learning, what counts as high-quality public service and at what cost.

Judgements about the operation of LEA Adult Education Services need to be made in recognition of such influences. For a long time, certainly since the Joint Efficiency Study (DES/WOED, 1987), adult education services have been accustomed to attempts to judge them against criteria developed primarily for full-time, young students on initial qualifying courses. More recently they have successfully argued for more harmonious criteria that adequately capture the service's nature and enable sensible comparisons to be made between different types of providers.

These varying perspectives upon quality have recently been consolidated into publicised frameworks which attempt to capture:

- the need to focus on teaching and learning as core business
- the need to ensure quality in all the different services which support this core business
- the need to have a systematic approach to assuring the quality of various aspects of the service.

OFSTED's quality assessment arrangements (1994) are based upon a framework for inspection which has been agreed with providers. This includes all aspects of the service - management, responsiveness, support and guidance, teaching and learning, achievement, resources, staffing and staff development, policy and planning etc. - but seeks to give overall grades to broad areas of service rather than collect endless performance indicators for small fragments of activity. The same approach is taken by the FEFC's inspectorate (FEFC, 1993).

In both of these cases quality is taken to be a multifaceted thing that can be enhanced through the combination of applying funding methodologies, acting on user perceptions, managing in the knowledge of a few key indicators, developing statements of service entitlements, implementing strategic plans, and assessing through direct observation and inspection.

Even using the same frameworks, quality can be quite context-specific. Substantially different features might be anticipated, for example, within (i) a centrally-managed service operating an externally-determined contract on a small number of relatively compact sites with full-time organising staff and affective administrative systems; and within (ii) an organisation with devolved management operating a largely internally determined service across a range of delivery sites and modes, with predominantly part-time staff partially disconnected from mainstream administrative support systems.

Any quality assurance system has to allow for these local variations in context whilst still being systematically applied. Services themselves must seek to ensure that the same minimum entitlements are applied universally across all outlets, provision and user groups. The basis of ensuring this access to quality rests on the existence of processes that are manageable, robust and systematic. The development of such quality assurance systems in adult education has been reported as being characterised by inconsistency and a lack of reliable management information (HMI, 1991); more recently, formal assessment by HMI reports that 'most Authorities are in the process of refining and extending their arrangements' (HMCI, 1996).

Local Quality Assurance: Distraction or Development Tool?

Developing more systematic drives towards quality is not, however, without its own contradictions. Some staff may view putting so much energy into efforts to demonstrate quality as the very thing that detracts

from the quality of service as perceived by users. Certainly the establishment and maintenance of quality assurance systems needs management and operational time and resources. This can reduce the resources available for direct delivery and can lead to reduced volumes of service, increased unit costs or exhaustion of committed staff. Moves towards quality are generally more acceptable to funders, managers, staff and users if, at the end of the day, they produce real changes rather than simply measure what exists.

When undertaken from such a service development perspective, the very process of staff working together to develop entitlements can have as much impact upon the service as can the mechanical ensuring of the delivery of those entitlements. The innovatory involvement of practitioners as part-time inspectors, and the practice of including someone from the staff of the institution as part of the inspection team, is building up a cohort of expertise. Elsewhere, in the context of school inspection, Brighouse and Wragg (1995) argue for any group undertaking inspection to include expert classroom practitioners. Although it comes at a cost and needs clear management, fostering quality by sharing practitioner expertise - eg staff think-tanks; curriculum development groups; peer observation/shadowing systems - rather than a reliance upon inspecting quality 'in' from the outside is an approach that carries a great deal of professional credibility.

The attitudes of managers are crucial within the whole 'quality' enterprise. Quality control, quality development and quality management can be approached as positive and supportive activities or as disconnected and troublesome tasks. Activities related to quality need to be actively managed and resourced as part of the whole service development plan. Where this is so, quality in adult education services can be - and is being - systematically approached in clearly planned, properly resourced, and realistic ways for the benefits of all stakeholders.

References

Association of Metropolitan Authorities (1992)
Quality Services - An Introduction to Quality Assurance for Local Authorities; AMA

Brighouse, T and Wragg, E (1995)
'Best of both worlds', Education, 29 September issue, page 7

Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office Education Department (1987)
Managing Colleges Efficiently; HMSO

Department for Education
Circular 1/93, DfE, 1993: The Further and Higher Education Act 1992

Donabedian, A (1980)
Explorations in Quality Assessment and Monitoring: Volume 1; Health and Administration Press, Ann Arbor

Further Education Funding Council (1993)
Circular 93/28: Assessing Achievement; FEFC

Her Majesty's Inspectorate (1991)
Education for Adults: a review; DES

Office For Standards in Education (1994)
Inspecting Adult Education - A Framework; OFSTED

Office For Standards in Education (1996)
Adult Education and Youth Work within LEAs: A Review of the Year 1994/95; HMCI

Pollitt, C (1990)
'Doing business in the temple? Managers and quality assurance in the public services', Public Administration, vol 68, no 4, pp 435-452

Stewart, J and Walsh, K (1990)
The Search for Quality; Local Government Management Board

Walsh, K (1991)
'Quality and public services', Public Administration, vol 69, no 4, pp 503-514

Adult Guidance in Local Authorities

Anna Reisenberger

Careers guidance used to be focused on the move from learning to work; now the need for adult guidance for both learning and work is recognised. In the future we can anticipate far more transition points in our lives when we might want to seek help and advice - less structured careers, the need for constant retraining, interrupted learning pathways, the opportunity to build up credit for earlier learning, with information sources that become increasingly complex. New technology should enable us to have vast amounts of information on education and training more readily available. Local authorities which want to encourage a learning environment will need to see how they can help the community have easy access to information and advice. Investment in guidance leads to more efficient use of the total resource of adult education and training in a locality.

In the 1980s local authority educational guidance services for adults flourished, assisted by Educational Support Grants. These services tended to be managed by adult education, targeting particular groups such as women returners and undertaking outreach work in rural areas or on housing estates. Services were supported by local advisory networks drawing their membership from the citizens' advice bureaux, education providers, jobcentres, libraries etc. Careers services, under LEA control, also worked increasingly with adults and the differentiation between educational and vocational guidance narrowed.

The pioneering work of these neutral community-based services has had a significant impact on subsequent debates about adult guidance. Many of the principles and practices enunciated in "The Challenge of Change" (NICEC, 1991): client-centredness, confidentiality, impartiality, equal access, networking, feedback to providers - have informed both the new NVQs in Advice and Guidance and the codes of practice issued by professional bodies.

But few of the LEA services have survived. The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act split the funding for "vocational" and non-vocational" adult education. By 1996 only a third of authorities were direct providers of adult education. Others fulfil their obligations to "secure adequate

facilities" by contracting with colleges and voluntary providers, and sometimes still fund free-standing guidance services. The contracting out of careers services from 1994 also meant that unless local authorities were successful bidders, they no longer had direct or sole control over the careers services' adult guidance. Whilst not changing guidance provision for adults, the new legislation focused on young people's needs and allowed services to charge non-statutory clients i.e. any adult not on a "vocational" course.

Access to guidance in colleges and universities has improved. The funding methodology for the newly incorporated colleges supports the development of in-house guidance, particularly on entry, where auditable evidence is required to secure impartiality. College growth targets also encouraged them to address the adult market and become more adult-friendly in their approach, and appropriate guidance was needed for these non-traditional students, often on modular courses.

In the early nineties the Employment Department became interested in the potential economic benefits of guidance in facilitating better take-up of training, better completion rates and placement into appropriate employment (UDACE, 1986). Adult guidance was promoted through short-term TEC initiatives, like Gateways, where competing providers in a locality offered guidance, sometimes through a voucher mechanism, for unemployed people and other target groups. One of the primary intentions was to provide a market for guidance; but adults were very reluctant to pay for guidance, except at the expensive end of the market. Gateways led to a greater interest in quality standards, more effective strategies for targeting particular groups, and more attention to measuring the outcomes of guidance interventions. With other TEC funded initiatives like Skillchoice, aimed at the employed and employers, Gateways expanded the range of people involved in provision and aware of adult guidance issues. Guidance is also a key part of employee development schemes and Investors in People.

However, an adult's chance of accessing any guidance depends very much on where he or she lives or works. A recent survey of members of

NAEGA (the National Association of Educational Guidance for Adults), to be published in Summer 1996, found that two thirds had experienced a decrease in funding in the past year. The greatest reduction has been in community-based provision, followed by Careers Service provision, with outreach activities in particular being cut. Community agencies are increasingly reliant on short-term rather than core funding, and this leads to cuts even when demand is buoyant.

In many services the funding is no longer coming from the adult education budget. In one authority women returners, ethnic minority students and unemployed adults remain the priority groups, but in order to be more cost-effective, and to meet European Social Fund targets for clients seen, more groupwork is undertaken.

This example illustrates two current trends: firstly the move to use external funding - often City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budget and European funding which all see adult guidance as key to economic development. Such bids usually necessitate a partnership approach, backed up by rigorous analysis of local need and labour market in which the local authority can play a significant role. The second trend is the extension of guidance agencies, which used to concentrate on individual advice and counselling, to various other income-generating services. Group workshops, Saturday sessions, short courses, computer-assisted guidance, psychometric assessments and C.V. workshops are increasingly common.

One council is involved in a multi-agency approach where an education shop in the town centre not only offers information on education, training and employment, but also runs workshops on the premises and outreach to outlying estates. Specialist counsellors and open learning facilities are on hand, avoiding referrals from agency to agency and allowing people to take their first steps back in confidence. Most importantly, the project feeds back information to providers and funders on gaps in provision. Jointly funded by the local authority, the TEC, the local colleges and careers service it sees nearly 20,000 clients a year.

In another partnership, the local authority has found multi-education providers to fund a guidance development officer, seconded by the TEC to develop a county-wide strategy. One county service offers return to learn courses and accredits portfolios.

The provision of information and guidance about opportunities is a way of supporting community and economic development, by facilitating participation in learning and training. Such provision of information assists localities to reach their targets for lifetime learning. So planning and economic development departments rather than education often take the strategic role.

In other authorities the role of libraries as community information and advice centres has been expanded. Some offer open learning and on-site use of computer packages. Guidance is an inescapable component of their staff's new roles. As libraries become public access points for the new technology, perhaps for local "telecottaging", the need for mediation and advice on the flow of information will grow.

Some local authorities prefer to maintain an active role by facilitating advisory networks rather than directly to fund services. Networks are a valuable source of feedback on adults' aspirations, on gaps in provision and on how to maximise existing resources by complementary rather than competing initiatives. One authority supports a network which has produced a local directory of all the education and training opportunities for adults; in another, a network has produced quality standards adhered to by all providers in the locality; others use such networks to mount partnership bids for significant funding.

Ironically just when many free-standing adult guidance services are contracting, there is growing interest in guidance and a consensus for an affordable national strategy. The National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance (NACCEG) whose membership is drawn from employers, TECs, research and development bodies etc, published a consultation document on a national strategy for adult guidance in March 1996 (NACCEG/RSA, 1996). This proposes a universal

foundation service consisting of up-to-date information on education and guidance, supported by IT, outreach provision and a national helpline (as has recently been set up in Scotland). People would have a brief consultation with trained advisers, to clarify their needs and "signpost" opportunities, but apart from the unemployed and low-waged, would have to pay for ongoing guidance. The proposal is that, like the contracted-out careers services, local bodies and partnerships would be invited to bid. This would present an opportunity for different parts of a local authority to become involved. NACCEG estimates it would take £5 million to set up the service, plus £10 million annually to support it, with additional sums for free second step guidance. It may be, however, that the government will look to examples of consortia of interested parties, as in the example of the successful education shop above, where those who see the benefits of guidance are expected to invest in it as well.

Adult guidance now takes place in a variety of settings - in the workplace, educational institution and on training and educational programmes - sometimes as a separate activity with specialist personnel, and at other times as a secondary part of another job role. There are obvious implications for guaranteeing impartiality, for staff development and for ensuring that people know when to refer to specialists. Guidance is no longer just the province of either educational or vocational guidance professionals.

Location and funding obviously determine both public perceptions of guidance (is this about information, jobs or learning?) and the outcomes the funder expects. Whatever its focus a quality guidance service should have comprehensive and up-to-date information, specialist trained advisers, suitable premises and equipment, referral networks and clear standards of service. (FEU, 1994) Local authorities have a range of options for setting up services or working in partnership to ensure that local people have the information and advice they need to access lifelong learning.

References

National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling/Policy Studies Institute (1991)
The Economic Value of Careers Guidance. NICEC

Unit for the Development of Adult and Continuing Education (1986)
The Challenge of Change. UIDACE

National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance/Royal Society of Arts (1996)
Consultation paper on a national strategy for adult guidance. NACCEG/RSA

Further Education Unit (1994)
Quality in Guidance for Adults. FEU

Relating to the Community

Pam Flynn
Principal Education Officer (Adult Education), City of Newcastle upon Tyne

57

Newcastle's Adult Education Service (AES) has been through two restructurings in three years. In 1992 adult education was merged with the youth and community service to form a Community Education Service and then, in 1994, disaggregated back into a free-standing Adult Education Service within the Education Department. The former youth and community service has merged with children's play to become a Children's and Young Peoples' Service in a new Community and Leisure Services Department.

The first restructuring was accompanied by a budget cut of £1 million to the newly combined service, with a further reduction of £0.5 million in 1993. Accompanying the budget cut and merger was a political argument in favour of decentralisation and devolution to local area forums which would advise the Education Committee on how best to allocate the limited resources remaining for community education. In reality, the rhetoric of empowerment accompanied a transfer of responsibility for service delivery to voluntary organisations and volunteer initiatives.

Unsurprisingly, relations between the Education Committee and its communities affected by the restructuring were strained at the outset, with officers of the Community Education Service bearing the brunt of the criticism! Fortunately, the rhetoric was also accompanied by a commitment from the Chief Education Officer downwards to the concept of partnership and joint endeavour, in which officers of the Department would work with community groups to achieve the best possible community education services for local people within the context of the necessary, though horrendous, budget reductions.

Contributing to the Education Service Mission

Now, in 1996, the education service in Newcastle has a clear mission of lifelong learning and partnership and of service to schools and their communities. The Adult Education Service is a key component in delivering this mission.

The LEA operates a 'hybrid' model of service delivery in that we 'secure adequate provision' in four principal ways:

- we make direct provision of Adult Basic Education and ESOL provision which is 100 % funded from FEFC
- we grant aid a significant number of community schools, adult associations and other voluntary organisations to make non-vocational, personal and social and liberal adult education provision available throughout the city
- we seek sponsorship via Newcastle College for an extensive programme of Schedule 2 provision, delivered by a variety of partners. Some of these are the same organisations which make non-vocational provision available; additionally, some departments of the City Council use FEFC funding for accredited training programmes within their work
- we contract with Tyneside Careers Partnership for the provision of an educational guidance service that is free to those who live or work within the city.

The LEA and our partner providers also seek to gain SRB, European Social Fund, City Challenge and any other relevant external funding to support our own and FEFC expenditures. Our soon-to- be-launched Literacy Collaborative, a cross-sectoral initiative, will gain financial resources from the National Literacy Trust.

The AES operates with some core values:

- targeting services at those most in need
- listening to individuals and community groups
- facilitating and enabling groups to develop the services they want
- networking
- maintaining open dialogue and negotiation wherever possible in the context of funding imperatives.

All these principles are rooted in community development methodology, and the current operational model is rooted in fifteen years of action research within Newcastle. This has taken different forms at different times, including: adult education outreach work; REPLAN initiatives; a development unit for adult and continuing education; an Access to Higher Education project; open learning systems; the development of neighbourhood learning projects; women's networks; multi-activity projects exploring new modes of curriculum delivery in non-formal education.

Current organisational form

The Adult Education Service is headed by a strategic manager supported by a small team of four development officers (each with a geographical and a curriculum remit) plus two administrative support staff. Additionally there are the Adult Basic Education and ESOL Services and an Educational Guidance Service, now contracted to Tyneside Careers. Two officers from the Education Service's planning and development section assist with the gaining of external resources, particularly FEFC, Single Regeneration Budget and Euro-funding.

As a result of the reorganisations in 1992 and 1994, the LEA moved to a system of grant aiding voluntary organisations, attracting as much external financial support as possible and offering guidance, support, advice and assistance to partner agencies in the voluntary sector. We currently work with 48 different organisations, co-ordinating bids from 32 of them to FEFC, from whom we gain resourcing of more than £1 million in contrast to a grant aid budget of only £200,000. The range of providers attracting funding from FEFC includes: our own directly managed and delivered ABE and ESOL Services; four community comprehensive schools; three other comprehensive schools; three independent Adult Associations (voluntary organisations); three neighbourhood learning projects; a youth arts project; a drama project for people with disabilities; two community-based training and education projects; a women's training organisation; a black women's

support project; a credit union support project; the City Farm; the governor training arm of the Education Service; the City Council's Personnel Training Unit, and the Community and Leisure Services Department of the City Council.

The LEA directly grant aids a number of these projects, and also grant aids fifteen smaller providers for whom FEFC funding criteria and methodology are not relevant. Such organisations include: parent and toddler groups; craft groups; creative writing groups; community associations and a neighbourhood-based community work training group. In all cases, an active educational curriculum can clearly be discerned. The LEA also supports the Workers' Educational Association in recognition of its important work in the realm of liberal adult education.

As indicated above, the grant aid budget is tiny in comparison with the external resources that are attracted to adult education. SSA-derived funding equates to only 94 pence per head of population over the age of sixteen. This rises to £5.92 per head when FEFC resources are included, and would rise further with SRB counted in. We therefore regard the Revenue Support Grant as contributing towards the task of securing adequacy of provision, enhancing organisations' capacity to offer course fee remissions or reductions, contributing to building rents, management and administration and to the securing of quality arrangements.

Operational style

The model of provision in Newcastle does not fall neatly into categories. We have deliberately chosen not to transfer all the City's continuing education under contract to an incorporated College, and have not delegated further education responsibility to community schools in the formal sense of formula-based earmarked block allocations or service level agreements. Instead, the City Council has made a conscious choice to seek sponsorship from our local college (we are a 'single-college'

authority) and to seek to develop a relationship with Newcastle College that is based on the recognition of mutual interest in achieving synergy rather than competition.

We have retained a distinct Adult Education Service, with an area-based model of delivery co-ordinated - though not directly planned - from the centre. However, we do not formally contract by means of service specifications, performance indicators or by inviting tenders for service. Voluntary organisations and schools bid for grant aid and for FEFC funding.

Education Committee sets a framework of criteria for the receipt of grant aid together with the anti-poverty measure of restricting fees for certain students to a maximum of one third of the 'full' fee. Additionally, the AES works within the Council's policy frameworks of anti-poverty, regeneration and economic development. We adopt and adapt a range of analytical tools, including the FEU Framework for Adequacy[1], for use in considering quality and standards of provision. We look to secure geographic and curriculum adequacy across the city, using area needs analyses carried out by the Chief Executive's research section and by community co-ordinators from Community Policies division to assist us. We also use Social Services' community care plan and family support plan as background data for our annual strategic planning exercise.

The service delivery model is therefore multi-faceted, kaleidoscopic and heavily reliant on consensus building, negotiation and dialogue. The building and maintenance of very close links with other departments of the Council such as Development, Community Policies division of Community and Leisure, Social Services, and the Chief Executive's research section is essential.

The AES plays an important part in corporate strategic planning. Our development staff team therefore essentially works as a 'communications broker', interpreting Council policies to community groups; bringing community concerns into the centre; engaging in dialogue at many different levels. Each member of the development

team carries up to five areas of curriculum interest in addition to their geographical remit and caseload. This enables them to move outside their geographical areas and to work across the city developing thematic, team-based work. Examples are young adults, Open College accreditation, learning in later life, parental learning, family literacy.

The Adult Basic Education and ESOL Services are moving from centre-based services into city-wide services, with tutorial locations easily reached from all areas of the city. They are increasing their focus on cross-sectoral initiatives such as family literacy, improving school effectiveness via parental development, increasing outreach, guidance and progression. We have recently had some success linking a GEST-funded 'Raising Attendance' project with ABE in a 'bridging' course, from which young people have gained Wordpower and AEB numeracy achievement tests.

Challenges

Outputs, milestones, clawback and risk

External resources - from FEFC, Europe, Single Regeneration Budget, City Challenge - outweigh internal (SSA -financed) budgets by a factor of six. We therefore need to be able to account to a range of funders, and as a consequence are monitored against a range of output measures. The transition to modes of output- and milestone-related operations has been difficult for some of our partner providers, especially the particularities of risk management associated with planning to trigger and then spend the demand-led component (DLE) of FEFC Schedule 2 funding. Similarly, SRB funding regimes are very tight, with quarterly monitoring periods and a continual threat of budget clawback if targets are not met. Difficulties can also be experienced with the 'penalty' metaphor running throughout the management of the funding by Government Office regional officials, who - perhaps suitably, given Newcastle's recent footballing prominence! - operate 'yellow card' and

'red card' warning mechanisms if it looks as though performance is not up to target/on schedule.

Securing consensus

The AES seeks to secure collaborative planning of programme delivery, where providers in a given geographic area agree in principle on which elements of provision should have priority and avoid unnecessary duplication or competition. Such an initiative requires careful development of clear partnership statements in which voluntary sector providers feel valued and within which all parties understand their respective roles. Given the difficulties associated with output-related funding, some providers experience a dilemma between following market-led delivery models and the need to target services towards learners who have benefited least in the past.

Additionally, providers can become preoccupied with short-term thinking - entirely understandable given the tensions of risk management and cash-flow management. This can lead to an unwillingness to think along three-year timescales. A recent move by several departments of the Council to three-year funding will hopefully assist in this process, and allow discussion of where organisations would like to go over the next three years -especially, in the context of AES strategy, in terms of developing enhanced learner support, enabling progression and attracting new learners.

Adult education in Newcastle has clearly prioritised its role as contributing to social and economic development and regeneration, through a strong focus on community development. Though there is a tendency (because of financial pressures) to drift towards market-led models of product and customer, most providers are willing partners in the project.

Quality improvement

The current 'stand-off' between OFSTED and the FEFC about who should inspect FEFC-funded provision that is delivered by LEA-sector 'external institutions'[2] is causing some concern to Newcastle. With forty eight different partners involved in securing adequate provision, plus a considerable number of primary schools engaged in parental learning and family literacy, we - like all other Services - would hope for as long a period of notice as possible of any intended inspection, and full information on the criteria and processes to be adopted. Meanwhile Newcastle is not standing still, and the Service is seeking to improve quality on a continuous basis; we are currently involved in peer mentoring and benchmarking of existing provision. But the existing confusion about who has the right to inspect where, when and with what assessment criteria is not helpful.

Building on strengths

Newcastle's key strength is its providers: the network of partners - all forty eight, autonomous projects, each with its own distinctive features and distinctive priorities, but each also committed to working with the City, the Education Service and the AES in the important task of developing lifelong learning as a tool of social and economic regeneration. The dialogue we hold with our partners is often robust, sometimes heated, but always - from the Service's perspective - focused on enabling community groups, schools and other agencies to deliver services which contribute to individual and community development.

A second strength is the Service's value system, clearly set down in the job descriptions of our staff and constantly informing our practice. We operate on the basis of supporting, enabling and assisting a range of partners in proactive and collaborative ways. This means drawing out the links between projects, interpreting and networking to translate the complex funding methodologies of FEFC and SRB, assisting projects through accreditation processes, and working with agencies to ensure

learner support and progression. Above all, it means working on the development and implementation of a strategic plan which is rooted in and located in the city's many and varied communities.

The management of the interpretation and of the risk associated with engaging so many projects in a common task is an exciting exercise. Small wonder then that we find it staggering that the government consultative document on Lifetime Learning[3] omitted to understand the importance of Local Authority adult education and indeed seriously patronised the sector.

Notes

1 *Adequate Provision for Adult Learners: A Framework, FEU bulletin, August 1994; a full report of the project which led to this framework is given in Securing Adequate Provision for Adult Learners, FEU, 1994.*

2 *The legal position over quality assessment is such that HMCI, through OFSTED, retains a statutory responsibility in respect of all LEA-sector provision while the FEFC remit is formally confined to FE-sector institutions. Clearly, however, FEFC would wish to inspect the quality of provision it funds. To this end the FEFC announced, as long ago as February 1994, development of co-ordinating arrangements and consistent inspection standards (see FEFC Council News No 12, 15 February 1994). A pilot joint OFSTED/FEFC exercise was mounted in Humberside in November 1994. While FEFC has subsequently consulted on making it a condition of funding to allow access to FEFC inspectors, no final decision has yet been announced. A further joint exercise was scheduled for Greenwich in March 1996.*

3 *Issued by the DfEE on behalf of the Secretaries of State for Education & Employment, for Wales and for Scotland in December 1995; the consultation period ended on 26 February 1996.*

Relationships in an FEFC-Funded Context

Chris Norris
Head of Adult Education, Surrey Youth & Adult Education Service

67

Surrey's response to the FHE Act (1992) has been to regard the separation of 'adult education' from 'mainstream FE' as an opportunity to celebrate the unique contribution of an LEA-sector Service, rather than to become a minor player in the 'vocational education' game. This approach was reinforced in May 1994 when the then Minister of State for FE, Tim Boswell, indicated that he '[made] no apologies for the national priorities as expressed in Schedule 2' but emphasised that 'local priorities, however, are no less important, simply different'[1]. Further confirmation, if it were needed, came from Surrey County Council in April 1995 when the Education Committee adopted a framework for providing quality for every learner, the cornerstone of which is the concept of 'education for balanced life'. Surrey Youth and Adult Education Service (SYAES) interprets its contribution to this goal as including education for work, for family, for leisure and for service to the community.

SYAES considers it to be an extremely weak strategy to turn LEA adult education into a variant of college-based FE. Furthermore we regard any knee-jerk response to imposed national priorities for adult education as morally suspect and ultimately self-defeating. We are not in the business of converting LEA education into FEFC education, but continue to seek and to secure an appropriate balance - within the local context, and Service history - between the FEFC curriculum and the continuing LEA duty with regard to 'Non-Schedule 2' provision for adults. We are, for example, firmly committed to sustaining provision for retired people which, according to NIACE statistics[2], has undergone a dramatic decline throughout England - but not Surrey - since 1992.

This is not to say that we have turned our backs on those aspects of adult education now within the 'Schedule 2' remit. But for this Service such provision is - and is likely to remain - a minority activity. This context, and our belief in responding to all adult learners' needs, has conditioned the way in which we relate to the Funding Council, and to our various FE-sector partners.

FEFC Funding of SYAES: A brief history

The implementation of the FHE Act curriculum divide meant in essence that central government removed £800,000 from the Surrey LEA adult education budget, gave it to the FEFC, and required the Service to go through a massively bureaucratic procedure in order to get the money back again. This seemed in many ways a pointless exercise, prompted by the dogma of the market-place and the concentration of authority in a quango. Once we had retrieved our money, we thought, we would spend it on exactly the same things, and in the same ways as we had spent it before it was taken from us. Things haven't quite worked out like that!

The disaggregation of budgets was, for us, an inexact science. Some SYAES staff appeared to misunderstand the nature of the task and over-estimated the volume of FEFC-fundable work we were providing - in some cases because they believed this would be to the benefit of the Service. Others underestimated the costs of Schedule 2 provision - this time because they were unclear which cost elements were to be 'counted in'. The end result was fourteen 'sponsorship' contracts of variable size and value, organised through three general FE colleges and two sixth form colleges (see Table 1).

As preparations were made for the 1994/95 funding year it became clear that something was seriously amiss. Data on 1993/94, once consolidated into new-style 'funding units', showed that many of the SYAES 'external institutions' were achieving only 50% of their target units despite the evident fact that the volume of 'Schedule 2' work had not diminished - indeed, enrolments on FEFC-funded programmes had increased. Furthermore, the average level of funding throughout the Service varied by a factor of 6.5, while our calculations indicated that costs varied by a factor of only 1.8. These factors demonstrated for us that the initial disaggregation of activity between LEA-funded and FEFC-funded elements of our activity had greatly exaggerated the volume of 'Schedule 2' work, and in cases had severely under-estimated the costs of undertaking that work.

TABLE 1: 1993/94 FEFC FUNDING				
	Funding £	Target Units	Actual Units	ALF £
College A Bids				
Hospital X	39,272	2,835	2,913	13.85
Area 1	97,595	20,550	20,769	4.75
Area 2	51,224	11,542	13,115	4.44
Area 3	112,775	17,124	11,739	6.59
Sub-total	**300,866**	**52,051**	**48,536**	**5.78**
College B Bids				
Area 4	50,639	14,030	8,586	3.61
Area 5	27,174	26,713	21,894	1.02
Area 6	34,626	34,572	16,722	1.00
Sub-total	**112,439**	**75,315**	**47,202**	**1.49**
SFC P Bids	**8,365**	**5,840**	**2,091**	**1.43**
SFC Q Bids	**17,442**	**10,499**	**9,237**	**1.66**
College C Bids				
Area 7	77,348	45,962	21,121	1.68
Area 8	109,744	16,589	15,256	6.62
Area 9	72,359	50,812	22,659	1.42
Hospital Y	44,373	13,485	5,541	3.29
Hospital Z	14,071	1,008	1,250	13.96
Sub-total	**317,895**	**127,856**	**65,827**	**2.49**
TOTAL	**757,007**	**271,561**	**172,893**	**2.79**

Armed with this information senior SYAES managers arranged a meeting with FEFC Regional Office, requesting a restatement of targets. A very cordial discussion ensued, but the outcome was clear: while FEFC could compensate SYAES for errors, it could not do so for our own 'optimism'. Extensive sessions with the calculator and our various statistical returns identified a few 'mode errors', which were accepted and rectified by FEFC, but the end result was still an actual performance of only some 64% of the stated target, which clearly influenced our 1994/95 funding allocation.

During this year one of the two sixth form college sponsors, with whom SYAES has had a long and fruitful partnership, quickly woke up to the benefits of franchising, and we moved that part of our FEFC funding arrangement from sponsorship into a franchising relationship with our partner, to mutual benefit. The other sixth form college continued to sponsor a small amount of work, while we combined the twelve remaining bids into three, grouped around the sponsoring FE colleges. This both simplified accounting and, more significantly, allowed us to mask variations in average levels of funding (ALF) and offset under-achievement in any one 'external institution' with over-achievement in another. This move clearly helped to allay declining morale 'in the field', where individual areas of the Service had begun to feel they were being 'measured' against colleagues. It did not however substantially salvage our position as a seemingly under-performing Service: details of the 1994/95 allocation are presented in Table 2.

In the light of the initial allocation for 1995/96, and armed with information on the actual costs of delivery as compared with the funding levels offered by the FEFC, we again visited the FEFC Regional Office to present our case for restatement of targets. A further pleasant discussion produced the advice that franchising may be our best option - advice which we have subsequently considered, but which at the time came too late to influence in any serious way our FEFC allocation for 1995/96.

Table 2: 1994/95 FEFC Funding			
	Funding £	Target Units	ALF £
FE College A Bids	272,487	46,846	5.82
FE College B Bids	102,207	67,783	1.51
SFC P Bids	7,604	5,256	1.45
FE College C Bids	290,551	115,071	2.52
Total	**672,849**	**234,956**	**2.86**

The sponsorship arrangement with the remaining sixth form college - attracting the lowest ALF in the Service - was discontinued following a rejected approach to translate the bid into a franchising relationship. Of the three remaining bids, two had been based initially on widely optimistic forecasts about the volume of activity we might achieve (as indicated by the difference between target/actual figures given in Table 1) and our performance meant that we were compelled to accept only core funding. The realism of the initial bid under the third FE college has however meant that we have, in this case, been able to achieve real funded growth. The 1995/96 funding allocation is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: 1995/96 FEFC Funding			
	Funding £	Target Units	ALF £
FE College A Bids	326,362	49,533	6.59
FE College B Bids	92,906	65,076	1.43
FE College C Bids	264,380	108,949	2.42
Total	**683,380**	**223,558**	**3.06**

FEFC as partners

We have, therefore, moved from a Service with fourteen FEFC funding allocations to one with only three - a helpful development, not least in the reduction of administration. More confusingly, we have seemingly reduced the volume of activity for which we are funded by some 17.6%; yet we know, on the ground, that the amount of Schedule 2 activity has increased. Throughout all of this, we have seen the average level of FEFC funding increase by some 8.8% - and have also entered into some lucrative franchising deals. The Service has to regard this combination of developments with some wryness, and not a little anxiety.

From the outset we viewed the FEFC funding methodology as quite alien to the LEA regime, and one which was going to create considerable extra work and expense. A new management information system capable of meeting FEFC requirements has been commissioned - at a cost of £100,000 in the first year, with more hardware costs to come. Many staff devote substantial - in fact, disproportionate - time to feeding the FEFC data-machine. While this might be necessary inside the FE-sector to maintain accountability, it is surely not a cost-effective way to finance LEA-sector organisations already directly accountable to local Committees, Councils and electorates.

ISR data seems totally out of scale with the realities of part-time adult education. How relevant is it that an individual obtained a language qualification through last year's course when this year they want to study modern literature? How meaningful is it to know where a retired student following an A-level course out of interest progresses to? How long will it be before our responsiveness to the idiosyncracies of adult learners reflects deleteriously on the Service through published 'league tables'?

Similarly, SYAES has not been best pleased in being asked to produce a strategic plan, and then being told how to structure it, when we have a well-established service specification and business planning framework within the LEA.[3]

The Service clearly has a degree of scepticism about the whole FEFC exercise. With the benefit of hindsight it is clear that SYAES got off onto the wrong foot with FEFC, that things could -and perhaps should - have ben done differently. There are two fundamental lessons which our experience has taught us:

- be scrupulously accurate - and honest - about the volume of FEFC work which is undertaken and which it is realistic to generate while maintaining the 'right' portfolio balance in terms of service goals
- be absolutely certain - and, if necessary, ruthless - about the choice of partners.

Yet despite these cavils we must stress that in all our dealings with the Funding Council, whether Coventry headquarters or the Regional Office in Reading, we have found FEFC staff to be unfailingly courteous, sympathetic, helpful and knowledgeable. Any misgivings we have are about the system and are most certainly not directed at the staff, who are of the highest calibre.

Collaborative working with colleges

Now that we have consolidated our FEFC bidding arrangements with three FE colleges, we are developing a programme of activity to ensure that sponsorship is more than a 'postbox' arrangement. On the one hand the colleges have sought to take seriously their responsibilities under the FHE Act, while on the other the Service has sought to derive more benefit from the relationship than the minimalism of passing on requests for funds. As long ago as 1994 SYAES was able to report on joint activities in the following terms[4]:

> The Service application for 1993/94 FEFC funding was processed through a number of sponsors. When [the Head of Service] met with the Principal of Guildford College to discuss the application, it became clear that both organisations shared overlapping missions to serve the community's educational needs. Both felt that

the education consumers in Surrey had more to gain from collaboration than competition between the two providers.

Realising the potential synergy through collaboration was not an easy task - much suspicion and territoriality was initially exhibited by staff of the respective organisations, although senior managers initiated a trickle of collaborative activities. To energise the process, the Service and Guildford College held a joint staff conference in July 1993. The theme of this 'Bringing Down the Barriers' event was a fundamental examination of organisational purpose, and how best that purpose can be achieved. Three core concerns provided joint focus:

- progression
- access and accessibility, leading to a widening of opportunities
- improving quality.

Subsequent change in attitudes between the staff of both organisations has resulted in a closer mapping of curriculum provision so that counselling and guidance of students is better informed. Students have been referred onto each others' programmes, and staff have begun to develop courses which are both complementary and progressive. The college, for example, is developing a post-A-level language programme to progress Service students, and a language drop-in workshop is being organised around the college's Languages Resource Centre. Co-operation in access work has developed even where provision overlaps: 'Access to Science', run by both organisations, shares the college's facilities, and work has begun on a common Access modularisation framework and joint moderation arrangements. Elsewhere in the curriculum joint ventures are being negotiated which will ultimately rationalise provision between the two providers (eg. counselling and teacher training), or set up new curriculum

> opportunities (eg. childcare, interpersonal skills and "women returners" programmes).
>
> The Service has followed a similar practice separately with all three [main] sponsoring colleges. There have been meetings of senior management groups, followed by joint staff development events. Practitioners are divided into curriculum groupings and work together to plan the programme offer for the coming year. Senior level meetings have also been held to ensure that each college's strategic plan makes appropriate reference to the sponsored Schedule 2 programme in the Service.

Similar collaborative activity continues. A series of 'roadshow' events has been held at each college, to introduce adult education managers and organisers to college managers and lecturers. Post-'roadshow' programme manager meetings have been held. The Principals of the colleges hold a termly meeting with the Head of the Youth & Adult Education Service, while Assistant Principals meet each term with the Assistant Head of Service (Adult Education). This latter group has made a successful bid to Surrey TEC for an Accreditation Officer appointment which, now in post, facilitates progression from adult education programmes into college courses, often via Open College accreditation. There have been numerous joint marketing exercises, ranging from purchasing space in one another's prospectus/programme listing to a completely integrated approach to Adult Learners Week throughout the county. Some college staff sit on Adult Education Area Advisory Boards.

It is perhaps ironic that none of these collaborative activities was developed when the Service and the colleges were all part of the LEA, 'co-ordinated' by the FE Department at County Hall!

Towards a changed relationship

Although a relatively small-scale element of our overall activity, part-time vocational education for adults remains an essential part of the SYAES portfolio. Despite the cementing of relationships with our three

FE-sector sponsors the Service is, in part because of the mis-stating of FEFC 'unit' targets described above and in part following the advice of the Regional Office, convinced that the best way to further develop the funding of the Schedule 2 work is via franchising.

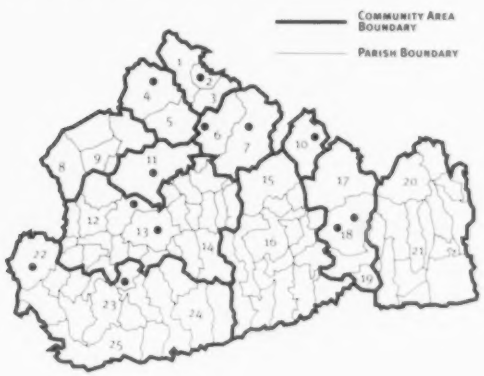
We see franchising as carrying a number of perceived benefits. In descending order of importance these are:

- a 'win-win' situation will be created whereby our success contributes to the success of the franchising organisation, and vice versa
- competition between providing institutions will at worst be reduced, at best eliminated
- the Service will, for its internal calculations even if not in published listings, attract a higher average level of funding per 'unit' as a result of the financial arrangements under franchising contracts
- franchising partners will acquire more flexibility, lower their own ALF and better achieve growth targets; this 'cheaper and higher-performing' status will stand the franchiser in good stead in the annual FEFC funding chase
- the administrative burden on the Service will be reduced, with franchisers seeking funds from and making returns to the Funding Council.

The choice of partners in this venture will be decisive. We feel confident that the highly supportive 'sponsoring' relationship developed, and the inter-institutional dialogue which has taken place at all levels of staff in the institutions, will stand us in good stead with current FE-sector partners. SYAES is, however, moving towards a more community-oriented programme, based on the 25 'natural' communities of Surrey (see Diagram 1).

Diagram 1

11 Borough Councils - 25 Community Areas



	Community Area	Population (1991 Census)
1	Staines and Stanwell	33,015
2	Ashford	25,739
3	Sunbury and Shepperton	31,233
4	Egham	28,722
5	Chertsey	43,067
6	Walton, Weybridge and Hersham	51,920
7	Esher	62,559
8	Camberley and Frimley	51,894
9	Bagshot Heath	27,179
10	Epsom and Ewell	67,007
11	Woking	86,764
12	West Guilford	38,516
13	Guilford	60,649
14	East Guilford	27,711
15	Leatherhead	41,819
16	Dorking	37,401
17	Banstead	43,404
18	Reigate and Redhill	52,007
19	Horley	22,166
20	Caterham	35,211
21	Oxted	41,105
22	Farnham	41,002
23	Godalming	33,094
24	Cranleigh	22,495
25	Haslemere	18,102

The disposition of FE-sector institutions in the county would seem to suggest that, in this strategic context, more geographically disparate partnerships might be needed. Certainly any franchise partner would need to have and be keen to develop community-based provision, and at the same time help the Service preserve and develop its own. Only in this way, we believe, can what might otherwise be regarded as destructive competition be avoided.

It may be that in a large shire county the administrative convenience of a small number of key partners - whether for sponsorship purposes or for franchising - fails to provide the best basis for planning. While SYAES operates strategically across the whole county much of the detailed programme planning, and nearly all the operational management is undertaken at the local level, in response to local need. We may therefore need to look again, in the light of our community

orientation, at the number and nature of partnerships with which we operate. To expand in more diverse directions while keeping faith with our three current sponsors - each of whom have invested much-appreciated time and effort with the Service - will be a demanding challenge. It is nonetheless one which must be met if SYAES is to maintain its own vision and intent, if the opportunity to create the best arrangement for the people of Surrey is to be seized.

Notes

1 *From a speech celabrating Adult Learners Week at Morley College, London on 12 May 1994.*

2 *See Alan Tuckett's article in this volume.*

3 *In the end the 1996/7 - 1998/9 strategic planning exercise, while onerous, did not prove overly distracting: the Service used the Business Plan produced for the LEA as a core document, and added commentary and appendices to meet FEFC requirements. Indeed, we now recognise that the detailed needs analysis required for Schedule 2 work, and the systematic analysis of risk required from us to meet FEFC demands, have actually been worthwhile enhancements, and we will augment future whole Service planning documents accordingly.*

4 *From 'Key Issues and Practice in Local Adult Education', NATFHE, 1994. By Bob Powell.*

Positioning Within the Local Authority (or 'Learning to love and live with Economic Development')

Terry George
Assistant Head of Service (Strategic Management and Action), Croydon Continuing Education and Training Service

30

Since 1994 Croydon's Continuing Education and Training Service (CETS) has been working with the Council's Economic and Strategic Development Unit (ESDU) in an innovative fashion and to mutual benefit. Initially commissioned to progress community development projects within the Council's 'Economic Strategy 2000', the partnership has flourished into an interactive relationship with the flagship unit of the Local Authority and has re-positioned the Service from the periphery to centre-stage.

Genesis of an idea

The idea of an adult education service contributing to the formulation and delivery of the economic policy of a local council stemmed from a number of sources:

- conference inputs at the then Staff College focusing on the medium- to long term positioning of 'adult education' within increasingly 'slimline' Local Authorities, and within a national context of promoting 'partnership' activity
- the relatively late development within the Council of a unit focused on economic development which, combined with resource constraints, meant that staff were head-hunted and redeployed from appropriate Council Departments, bringing their personal contacts and networks with them; personnel so selected invariably combined a flexible approach with a forward-looking, open-minded attitude disposed to innovation and change
- in one of those odd coincidences of life, the Head of the newly-formed Economic and Strategic Development Unit had observed CETS working on a Hungarian partnership project about institutional and community renewal: 'what they can do for Hungary, they can do for Croydon' was an obvious conclusion.

The collaboration started, initially, with ESDU buying-in the expertise of CETS' senior managers to project-manage the set-up of Croydon's Business Link, with a director from the TEC. This successful start persuaded the Chief Executive that a sustained input was required to import insights that reflected the human needs of the Borough's workforce and broader population. Ever conscious of criticisms of strategic plans that remain un-implemented, gathering dust on shelves, Croydon attempts to ensure that projects and actions are both deliverable and delivered.

An internal structural change was introduced assigning a senior CETS manager to work alongside the Economic Programme Team. In order to ensure the ability to direct and deliver, this secondee retained authority and status within the Service, and continued to hold lead responsibility for strategic planning. This move would, it was envisaged, ensure the integration of CETS' objectives with economic planning. Equally, the secondee was regarded as an integral member of the Economic Development team.

Pre-requisites

It is interesting to hypothesise whether the Croydon experience could be replicated elsewhere, or whether there are specific contextual circumstances which made the exercise unique, a one-off. Certainly it has been important that the Borough's Economic Development Team was new and open to innovative experiments. But there are, additionally, specific characteristics of the Service that have rendered it intrinsically likely to perform well within the terms of the Local Authority's corporate strategy:

(a) a diversified continuing education organisation

Over the past 10 years CETS has developed its curriculum and service offer along a very broad - and variously funded - range of programmes. As an 'edge city' to London, Croydon geographically bridges the adult

education traditions of shire-county liberal adult education centres and inner-city institutes targeting basic skills, access and vocationally-oriented provision at disadvantaged groups

(b) an outward-looking, learning organisation

Like many other outstanding adult learning services, CETS turns itself outwards, responding actively and enthusiastically to changing needs in its local environment. As an 'outside-in' organisation, we have learned to welcome change and regard new opportunity as a challenge rather than as a threat. Part of our success can be attributed to an awareness that organisations constantly renew themselves by learning - learning from mistakes and from risks taken as much as from successes

(c) a flexible and multi-skilled staff

Like many other entrepreneurial adult education services, the management and development staff have learned to seek opportunities at every step. The precarious future of Local Authority funding has driven CETS to explore alternative sources of funding across a wide front; opportunism has become a way of life. When the local TEC declares it has spare funds to disperse towards the end of the financial year, no one in CETS says 'no'. This responsiveness, coupled with fast reaction time, has become the norm; we readily grasp opportunities to develop within existing organisational boundaries, and to extend beyond them.

(d) networking capability

Most energetic adult education services are justifiably proud of their extensive linkages with different groups in the community. 'Partnership' as a way of working does not need creating; it is already a way of life. Front-line Local Authority services such as CETS can thus contribute perspectives to economic planning which are often neglected. Economic development units are in daily touch with TECs, ministries regional

advisory groups. However, they miss the rich insights learned from community associations, from self-help groups of unemployed people or mothers aiming to rejoin the workforce.

(e) distinctive competencies

Into the dynamics of the economic programme CETS has brought information and competencies developed from its own area of work. In a joint study with the Health Authority, for example, the Service conducted extensive research into the needs of people in disadvantaged wards targeted by the Council; published results were authoritative and of proven accuracy, but they held few surprises for CETS' staff who found in the report corroboration of the collective experiences gained from working in the area on a daily basis.

(f) re-positioning skills

In common with similar services, CETS has learned as an organisation to seek out opportunities and adapt constantly to new demands. Developing a flexible mindset, often re-interpreting and re-packaging expertise for a new opportunity, these experiences have been adapted to the new environment of economic and strategic development. Opportunities have not always been recognised; sometimes openings were recognised only in arrears. It now - in hindsight - seems obvious that a Council which sets a strategic objective to 'improve the quality of life and the environment' must build upon the work of its adult education service. If anything has been learnt about environmental awareness, it is that the key factor is how people respond and contribute. And people have always been the raw material with which adult education works, enabling communities and individuals to achieve their objectives.

Benefits of collaboration

The Croydon exercise in partnership (between a front-line adult education provider and the Council's economic development unit) has been evaluated by both parties as an outstanding success. What has driven this success? And how is it being measured?

Both partners take a pragmatic stance. Success is measured in terms of achieving published Council objectives; it is demonstrated by moving from plans and concepts to projects that have been implemented. And, as added-value, a long-term, irreversible change in the relationship between the two organisations has resulted. The fact that adult education services have lived a Cinderella existence all their organisational lives also means that much can be delivered for the minimal resource input. Value-for-money measurements are excessively positive. Impact is significantly high.

For Croydon's Continuing Education and Training Service, benefits have included:

Internal positioning and influence

The most tangible outcome has been the move from the fringes of the Council's activity to centre stage. Previously, CETS was positioned as a minor unit operating on the periphery of the Education Department. While valued for its commitment and hard work, and effectively entrepreneurial, it was not regarded as pivotal to the Council's own priorities. With the move to closer work with ESDU, CETS has become an actor with allocated authority to deliver tangible outcomes to the Council's own lead priority area, economic development.

Recognition as a lead player

Through this relationship change, CETS has became an automatic partner and contributor in all major strategic developments and

funding opportunities. In preparing bids to the Challenge Fund, CETS naturally became the lead facilitator to develop the human resource initiatives needed to deliver the projects. Further, CETS is a lead player in joint developments between the Council and external agencies. For example, CETS' experience in working with disadvantaged groups was seen as a prime asset in driving forward joint Local Authority/Health Authority projects to regenerate the most deprived areas of the Borough and address residents' stated needs.

Additional resources

The single most tangible and enduring monument to the CETS/ESDU partnership to date is a physical resource which expands Service capability. For years the need for a delivery-centre in the heart of North Croydon - the most deprived area in the Borough, with high unemployment and a large and underprivileged minority ethnic population - was known, but no response was possible because of weak resource levels. In 1994/95, ESDU's first gesture of partnership was to pump-prime the entire refurbishment and set-up costs of a new training centre here. This was no goodwill gesture, however, but in itself a response to the 'Economic Strategy 2000' initiative which places high value on improving access to skills and jobs in the regeneration areas, creating a synergy between partners' priorities.

Assistance with implementing planned developments

Collaboration within the Authority has meant that CETS has gained new developmental opportunities to translate forward Service planning into reality. In 1995 two large EU Community Initiative projects were won. However, the fundamental condition of this programme (i.e. a consortium of like-minded projects in at least two other European member states) would not have been achieved if CETS had not represented Croydon Council at the

Directoria convention in Brussels. The Community Initiative programme is about developing action programmes for disadvantaged groups. An adult education service is an obvious representative, but few other authorities across Europe saw fit to send an AE delegate. It was possible in Croydon because of the seamless partnership with economic development.

Extra 'leverage'

Later in the year the favour could be returned: CETS used the experience gained in negotiating transnational partnerships to assist the Economic Development Team prepare and subsequently win a £3m ADAPT bid to the Community Initiatives programme. Croydon, three other local authorities, two TECs and two FE colleges - all partners in the same scheme - have gained benefit from the new CETS' expertise and enabled Croydon to stamp its clear authority and leadership on the UK end of the transnational project.

Enhanced political standing and public relations profile

It is rare for an adult education service to be seen by a Leader of the Council and elected members as delivering their own key priorities. An attitude of benevolent pleasure at providing a quality service to local residents - as long as it does not cost too much - might be a more typical attitude. But economic development and unemployment are currently viewed as Croydon's key priorities for action. The partnership with economic development has thrown a sharp spotlight on the activities of the Service; the Council's most senior decision-makers have become aware of how the re-positioning of continuing education is optimising action on their own priorities.

For every benefit to CETS, there is a mirror image from its Council partner in economic development. Interviewed for this article Paul

Hildreth, Head of the Council's economic programme, settled on two principal gains:

Added dimension

Each member of the Economic Programme Team has its own network of contacts and partners. None, however, works so directly and so extensively with residents in their own right as does CETS. All have links with business leaders, chambers of commerce etc, but no other can bring a living flavour gained from working actively with 20,000 residents as an adult education service does. This contact with the needs and reactions of residents - and particularly with those whose opinions are rarely heard - keeps the Team's thoughts out of the ivory tower and in touch with everyday realities.

Action delivery

By far the most significant contribution made by Croydon's Continuing Education and Training Service to the agenda of the Economic Programme Team is action on the ground. The action programme is challenging and not always totally within the capacity of a Council to control. CETS, on the other hand, has gained the reputation of 'Mr. Fixit'. Primed with the Council's authority, empowered to search out additional sources of funding, skilled in managing the multiplier effect of matching one funding resource with another, and given the support to take calculated risks ... CETS is seen to be delivering.

Cautionary notes

There may be elements in Croydon's CETS/ESDU partnership which are unique, but there are probably many others which can be replicated. It is worth noting, therefore, what lessons have been learned from the Croydon model. Chief amongst these are:

Beware the heavy hand of bureaucracy

CETS' main role is action-delivery. It is for this that its contribution is valued. All the more important, therefore, to ensure that the 'rules of engagement' are clearly understood - if possible, negotiated in advance. Minimal committee reports; negligible attendance at internal Town Hall meetings and committees; avoidance of inter-departmental rivalries; procedures which promote delivery rather than block it ... in Croydon, we have been lucky. The Head of the Economic Programme has usually shouldered these burdens, thus contributing to CETS' ability to deliver the promised actions.

An 'overload' tendency

Labour-intensification is a phenomenon in most Council departments. Playing dual roles has meant a 120%+ commitment for the actors in the CETS/ESDU initiative. The specialist area of work, combined with the wealth of personal contacts needed, adds further pressure by limiting the opportunity for delegation. It is one of the paradoxes that team members have been heard to pray for a funding bid to fail - as the best route to personal survival!

Potential conflict of interest

Inter-organisational rivalries and inter-departmental jealousies have not withdrawn as the partnership has achieved its successes. Indeed, the capacity for nourishing them has grown. The potential for 'feathering one's own nest' by ensuring that a position of authority is gained by CETS against other training bodies is enormous. Sensitivity to this clear-cut conflict of interest is important.

The need for trust, and clarity of intent

Partnership is one of the key words in Croydon's Economic Strategy. Positive partnership between rivals interested in maximising their share of the resource cake develops from trust and mutual recognition of organisational strengths. Signalling which hat you are wearing - an objective representative of the Economic Programme, or a partisan member of a rival training organisation - is a vital technique in minimising the effects of inter-organisational suspicion and envy.

The importance of time management

All best-laid plans are reduced to zero impact by inappropriate timing. The best timing deadlines may not coincide with term-times or weekends off. Learning to live with one's own last-minute crises has become an essential survival strategy. Learning to integrate one's own timing crises with those of other colleagues and partners sharpens the edge - and sometimes pushes you over.

Conclusion

Mintzberg claims that the most effective strategies emerge rather than being pre-planned; Kirkegaard wrote 'we live life forwards, we understand it backwards'. How right they were!

When Croydon's Continuing Eduction and Training Service began to act upon the notion of internal collaboration within the terms of the Local Authority Economic Development Strategy, none of the actors had a clear idea of the results that would emerge. Only by glancing backwards have the patterns and events noted here emerged clearly. After two years of trial and experimentation, however, it is sure that none of the actors directly involved would wish to return to the beginning and the earlier status quo.

Working with the Employment Sector: Adult Education's Contibution to Economic Development and Regeneration

Pam Gibson
Principal, Kent Adult Education Service

91

Recent reports such as the National Commission's "Learning to Succeed" have identified the need to develop a learning culture and the importance of continuing education in contributing to this. Yet despite the rhetoric, the role of adult education in developing a learning workforce has received limited recognition. Poor performance nationally towards achieving National Targets for Education and Training, especially in respect of 'lifetime learning', has given cause for concern both to Local Authority Education Departments and to the Training and Enterprise Councils. There is enormous potential for LEA adult education services to contribute to improving this situation, yet not all LEAs nor TECs recognise the opportunities available to them through their local services.

Development and Change

Kent Adult Education Service was formed in 1993 by merging the pre-existing six separate area services and bringing them within broad County Council guidelines. Each of the separate services had developed in different ways depending on the views of their respective Principal. This gave the new Service, KAES, a breadth of experience to build on, as well as a range of strongly held views on the role of adult education, including pockets of enthusiasm for developing work with local employers. In contrast to this there were some fairly strongly held and sceptical views about the appropriateness of this work.

In 1992 the level of externally funded work for employers was small and links with the TEC were only beginning to emerge. A 'Languages for Employers' programme which started in one part of the county was struggling to survive, partly due to the recession and partly because it was only in the early stages of development. There were several unsuccessful attempts to attract funding from Kent TEC, but their criteria seemed to be focused on achievement of NVQs to the exclusion of any other developmental work.

The situation now shows significant change. In three years the amount of direct work with employers has grown steadily and links with Kent TEC are strong. This work complements the mainstream adult education programme - both Schedule 2 and Non-Schedule 2 - and gives a new constituency of adults a first experience of post-school learning. Evaluation of the work and feedback from these new clients and students has been constructively critical, and valuable in making improvements to the programme generally. There are two main strands to KAES' current work in this field: work funded by Kent TEC targeted at employers; and the Service's direct work with employing organisations.

Kent TEC

Work with Kent TEC covers a range of initiatives aimed at different target groups. Income from these projects in 1995/96 is in excess of £250,000. Although this is time-limited funding, each new project strengthens the relationship and enables the Service to work more closely and with better understanding of TEC priorities, and increases the number of individuals participating for the first time in adult education. Projects range from counselling courses for members of minority ethnic groups to training needs analysis for job related action planning in local companies.

One of the most significant developments in Kent is the TEC-funded 'Return to Learn' (RTL) scheme through which employees from participating companies can have the costs of non-job related courses covered up to £100: 50% from the TEC, 50% by the employer. KAES piloted this scheme in part of the county and it has now been extended across all of Kent. KAES is now the major provider for the scheme, which has brought many students to adult education for the first time; around 80% of the 2,000 employees participating this year are attending KAES courses. Linked in with this are three other developments:

- the Small Firms Initiative: 6-week discrete courses held on business parks in employers' premises
- the 'Gateway' initiative: a guidance offer for companies joining RTL
- a development contract to work with companies, primarily those who have already participated on RTL, to assist in Training Needs Analysis for the companies and job- related action planning for their employees.

KAES is also signed up on the scheme as an employer, providing an additional incentive for our staff to participate in learning. Although some go elsewhere, the vast majority are on our own courses.

Despite the success of RTL-style schemes such as Ford EDAP, employee development programmes have not spread as quickly as might have been expected. This is partly due to financial pressures on companies, and the lack of recognition that investing in people can give a better return than capital investment. It can be less tempting to the small firms typically found in Kent where there is not the potential for in-company career progression - a well trained and motivated employee may have to look outside. The TEC-funded Return to Learn scheme has encouraged local companies and their staff to get involved in training.

Other TEC-funded projects or contracts include:

- development work to establish 'Access-ability' - a programme of educational guidance and support for people with learning difficulties, physical disabilities, and mental health problems, previously established in only one part of the county in collaboration with Social Services
- Training for Work
- establishing NVQs in Childcare and Education
- providing support to offer Certificate in Education for those with overseas qualifications
- counselling training for minority ethnic communities

- a range of Family Literacy projects developed in collaboration with the Basic Skills Unit.

But the relationship is not only about funding. KAES is actively involved with Kent TEC through formal and informal working groups, contributing for instance to monitoring NTETs, to developing and monitoring Kent Education and Training Targets (KETTs), and looking at ways of improving the marketing of NVQs. This is very much a two-way relationship; for instance the TEC recently negotiated on our behalf for access to FE development funding.

In order to work effectively with organisations such as the TEC we have had to understand their priorities and find ways that the Service can contribute. Initially their main interest was in NVQs, and the first successful venture with them was part funding for an NVQ development officer in the Service. Having established this contact we were able to get funding for an APL and Access project linked into NVQs. As we worked more closely with TEC officers, and understood their priorities, we were able both to influence these and identify opportunities where our areas of work could contribute more directly to achievement of their targets. TECs are not always, however, able to help in the meeting of service development goals. In our case, for example, the shift of TEC resources from working with disadvantaged groups to working more directly with employers and employees can make it difficult to access external funding for some of our own Service priority areas.

Factors at present which bring the TEC and adult education closer together include:

- the need to achieve lifetime learning targets, and the recognition of the value of non-vocational work to developing a learning culture
- the pattern of businesses in Kent with a large proportion having fewer than 200 employees, and many with fewer than 24

- the value of having a county-wide Service which can coordinate provision across the county from a central point, without having to go to different providers.

As a service we are firmly committed to collaboration. When other providers often see potential competition, we prefer to see opportunities to increase participation rates. Despite limited resources the service is prepared to make a commitment to joint ventures which will raise awareness about the value of adult education. These characteristics have helped in developing a positive working relationship with Kent TEC.

Work with Employers

Work with employers has also grown steadily. From small beginnings KAES currently has contracts with 30 major employers and aspects of provision are targeted directly at Kent's many small businesses. The language scheme for business, 'ADLIB', which started in one part of the county, has recently been extended and is now a respected provider for the commercial sector. Contracts for ferry companies, manufacturers and telecommunications have won acclaim in the business community and the Service now offers business training regularly in France. These tailor-made courses complement the TEC-funded 'Return to Learn' initiative reported above.

To meet employers' demands for working with local centres, but to a county-wide quality standard, we have introduced the 'In Business' programme . Starting with 'Maidstone in Business', in the next two years this programme will extend to all major towns in the county and will also enable us to strengthen links with District Councils. A European Link Project offers made-to-measure English language and vocational programmes for adults from the European Union. This initiative began with a joint venture with the Walloon regional government, and now includes specialist English courses for specific industries, along with work placements and accommodation with local families arranged by the Service.

Labour market intelligence collated by the Kent TEC is used to identify areas for development of courses; the report of unfilled vacancies shows changes in employment trends. New courses to be targeted at specific occupational sectors will be piloted in the mainstream programme before marketing to employing organisations. Recent employment trends in the county, with a fall in manufacturing-sector employment and an increase in service industries, have for example led to the development of more customer-care courses.

In working with employers, direct personal contact has proved to be most effective, particularly when this has developed from some other joint involvement such as an external group meeting. To improve these contacts the Service was invited to join local groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, which is open to all, and local industry associations after writing or speaking to the convenor about the role adult education could play in their work.

The current level of work with businesses is still just the tip of the iceberg. Only a small proportion of Kent's firms are involved, and only half the AE centres in the county have developed links with local firms. Examples of good practice are now being shared through the Service's Business Development Group.

Service Strengths in Employment-sector Work

Feedback from employers shows that they value the 'localness' of the service, despite the fact that nearly all services we provide for them are on their premises anyway. Other positive features identified include:

- being able to deliver at a time and place to suit them, including evenings, lunchtimes and at varied times to suit shift patterns
- being able to deliver tailor-made courses to their specifications

- having direct contact with the person who will deliver the training
- knowing that person has both authority and ability to adapt if needed to meet changing client needs.

One of the main strengths of adult education in meeting today's training needs is its flexibility. In Kent this includes courses on board ship for ferry staff, flexibility to put on an intensive Norwegian course at a week's notice, and working with the RAF to accredit NVQs in the normal course of their work.

The purpose of LEA Adult Education is to provide a broad range of courses to meet community and individual needs, often with an agenda of addressing social disadvantage. Work with employers is not core business, but adult education providers are experienced specialists in working with adults. If individuals, whether in employment or not, are to succeed with their learning then adult education is well placed to provide that opportunity.

There can be little doubt that the way adult education is organised in Kent has contributed to the success of these developments. The benefits of a large, integrated Service are that different approaches can be piloted in different parts of the county. Direct targeting of employers, for instance, is being trialled in one area, while in another we are piloting a market segment approach. As a county-wide Service we provide a one-stop service for Kent TEC, with coterminous boundaries and a network that can deliver across the county from one 'phone-call or meeting. We have an enormous resource in our staff and are able to provide training to meet a particular need at short notice.

Lessons from Our Experience

1 Don't expect overnight success: marketing and promotion activities in industry are not expected to generate a return in less than three years; we expect new mainstream courses to

take time to establish and the same approach is needed for work with employers.

2 Be clear about the value of employment-sector work: it may be culturally unacceptable to some adult education personnel; we have found it is important to make it clear that work with industry and commerce strengthens the profile of the service and does not divert resources.

3 Find out what interest and links already exist within the organisation: adult education services in general have more links with employing organisations than they might expect. A survey in Kent a few years ago showed that a substantial number of students were attending job-related AE courses and claiming the costs from their employer. Some tutors will be former managers from local companies, teaching on both vocational and non-vocational courses. And be prepared to exploit what links there are: the present strong KAES links with the Wallonian government started initially with a family contact of a member of staff.

4 Target publicity: the typical adult education prospectus contains many relevant courses, but will not necessarily attract an employer's attention. Use any existing contacts, for instance through tutors who have links with these firms. Find out which local employers the students come from and consider offering tailor-made courses.

Adult education plays a unique role in economic development and regeneration through its ability to access large numbers of individuals from all sectors of society either into further education or employment. User satisfaction is at a high level. The combination of flexibility and customer focus, and in the case of Kent the scale of operation, gives the qualities that can meet the needs of local employers. Involvement in work with local businesses benefits individuals, and moves local companies and communities towards the learning culture.

Notes

1 *National Commission on Education, Learning To Succeed: A Radical Look at Education and A Strategy for the Future, Heinemann, 1993*

Planning at Consortium & Service Level: The Buckinghamshire Experience

Alan Noble
Education Officer (ACE), Buckinghamshire County Council

101

It is probably true to say that in Buckinghamshire, until just over three years ago, adult education planning consisted of making sure there was a programme on offer each September and offering a few prayers that sufficient students would turn up.

Many will probably suggest publicly - whatever they may think in private - that, in this, the county was idiosyncratic. They will claim that there has always been long-term strategic planning in Local Authority adult education, with the curriculum offered matching the needs of the community and resources being used in the most efficient and effective way. Certainly many Authorities have, over recent years, used their AE services as one of a number of delivery arms through which corporate policies and political priorities have been enacted. Even so, it is fairly clear that full strategic planning of local adult education provision has gained importance as services across the country come to terms with three of the key pressures of the 1990s: tight budgets, responding to the demands of external funding agencies, and increased competition in the marketplace.

Buckinghamshire has found that it takes considerable time and investment to develop the service to a point where we can ride out the funding storms, provide all necessary information in a coherent manner and begin to work co-operatively with our local competitors.

Background

In 1992 the Adult Continuing Education Service consisted of 23 autonomous centres, each with at least one full-time staff member, structured somewhat roughly into four areas under loose co-ordination from County Hall. The programme was distinctly traditional, separated into general adult education and 'Special Provision' - a combination of basic skills, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and special needs work targeted at particular client groups and overseen by separate teams of specialist staff. At that stage, with provision delivered on some 260 sites and very much demand-led, the Service was reported as

enroling some 40,000 adults on approximately 3,000 courses. Despite this volume of activity - perhaps because of it - there was very little co-ordination inside the Service, let alone with other providers of adult learning opportunities. Full county meetings of staff were very rare and, in all honesty, the Service had become disparate and inward-looking with only limited collaborative activity.

Throughout 1993 and in early 1994 the Service undertook an extensive internal review of its purpose, structures and ways of working. Conducted in the context of the Education Committee's consideration of changes to its remit, both in respect of the FHE Act (1992) and the Education Act (1993), the review recognised:

- the Local Education Authority's continuing duties in respect of so-called 'Non Schedule 2' work
- the need for co-ordination, under the FEFC, for 'Schedule 2' work taking place outside colleges of further education
- the need for an enhanced relationship between the ACE Service and schools, especially in respect of the use of premises for adult education provision (within Buckinghamshire funded through a centrally-controlled 'wider use' budget distributed on a largely historical basis)
- HMI suggestions relating to the need for LEAs to work in partnership with FE colleges and voluntary organisations, and the consequent need for new models of partnership both within the Service and with other providers of adult education
- the need to build upon developed good practice within ACE to create a more flexible, yet stronger Service focused more directly on responding to identified needs
- the necessity to develop a co-ordinated and co-operative approach across the Authority so as to enable coherence, local diversity and financial viability. This approach also sought to ensure staff ownership of future planning

processes, and to develop a corporate 'single service' identity and ethos to facilitate response to identified educational needs.

Fourteen internal Service Task Groups were set up, each consisting of a representative from each Area Team and from Special Provision and co-ordinated by an Assistant Education Officer. These groups (see Table 1) were given clearly defined tasks and timelines, and were expected to produce reports for County Team Meetings where the views of the full Service could be aired. During the review period such meetings became a regular monthly event, and formed the focal point for internal decision-making.

Table 1: Focus of Task Groups for Internal Review

FEFC	Budget	Special Provision
Open College	Image and Marketing	Staff Development
Training	Quality	Corporate Plan
Curriculum	Equal Opportunities	Health & Safety
Information Technology	Guidance	

Local issues were dealt with in Area Team meetings, comprising Heads of Centre and Heads of Special Provision, which also allowed planning of responses to Task Groups.

Local Development Forums

Three Local Development Forums were set up to ensure there was a local dimension to planning: in the Milton Keynes area, in Aylesbury Vale and in the south of the county. Each of these reflected the area of a local further education college, mirroring the Service's new

'sponsorship' arrangements for FEFC funding through three 'external institutions', albeit with overarching central co-ordination.

Local Development Forums brought together representatives from colleges, schools, voluntary organisations, other agencies and LEA/Service personnel. Initially established to help ensure a smooth transition to mixed-economy funding and to enable partnerships to develop in an air of mutual trust, these bodies continue to consider the planning, provision, progression and accreditation of adult education programmes (see Table 2). In recent times the Local Development Forums have also convened multi-agency conferences on key issues of common concern, including guidance, 'adequacy' and strategies to enhance lifelong learning.

TABLE 2: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM REMIT

Aims
1 To co-ordinate the provision and development of adult learning
2 To ensure access to the widest possible choice of provision for all adults in a local area
Objectives
1 To identify the learning needs of adults in the area
2 To review existing provision
3 To make recommendations for new provision where learning needs are not currently met
4 To co-ordinate and encourage a partnership among providers of adult learning
5 To enhance local networks in order to ensure routes of progression
6 To encourage a partnership approach to external funders
7 To ensure that bids destined for the FEFC are co-ordinated at a local level
8 To produce a local corporate plan within the terms of the FHE Act (1992)

Of course all this - and not least the incidence of county-wide and area team meetings - required considerable investment of time and effort. Many of our staff, previously attuned to Centre-focused activities and concerned to sustain local operations, indicated initial anxiety about meeting overload. Service managers nonetheless recognised that this twin-track approach was critical in beginning the transformation to a cohesive service with an outward-looking vision.

'A Framework for the Future'

At the end of the review period the Service published its three-year (1994-1997) development plan, 'A Framework for the Future', in which the necessity of strategic planning was clearly identified. The Framework document, approved by an ACE Panel of elected members, also formally recognised the newly formulated mission statement as the reason for sustaining the Service and emphasising the need for collaboration in future developments:

> The Adult Continuing Education Service will support, develop and create learning opportunities for adults which will foster personal development in a rapidly changing society. It will improve the quality of learning within an overall policy of equality of opportunity for all adults, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, religion, previous educational experience, financial situation, physical or mental ability.
>
> The Service will achieve this mission by working within a framework of co-operation and collaboration and will pursue common goals through the sharing of ideals and ideas, while offering mutual trust, respect and empathy. It will work in partnership with other organisations to create, co ordinate and increase access and progression routes.

'A Framework for the Future' addressed a wide range of issues (see Table 3) and, for the first time, set out a clear set of Service Objectives.

Table 3: Issues addressed in 'A Framework for the Future'

- the realignment of centres into geographical consortia of curriculum opportunities that promote progression
- the matching of cost-centres to this realignment to ensure adequate finance to support new developments
- the creation of a career structure for all staff with access to appropriate training and support
- the integration of Special Provision into the consortium structure in order that enhanced and planned pathways for adult progression are provided
- the implementation of a management structure to ensure access to FEFC funding and the development of links with schools, colleges, TECs and voluntary organisations in line with the Service's policy
- the co-ordinated distribution of wider use funding and the planning of partnership arrangements to create the most effective local curriculum opportunities
- the matching of local consumer groups to the consortia cost-centres with appropriate powers of decision-making
- the more effective and efficient use of clerical and administrative staff within each consortium to enhance customer care
- the establishment of telephone and correspondence criteria in line with the requirements of the County Charter
- the development of a core and extended curriculum within each consortium, with Open College accreditation
- the establishment of co-ordinated information and guidance for all adults
- the promotion of a county-wide approach to quality assessment, including the introduction of Investors in People and the monitoring and evaluation of curriculum delivery
- the identification of key tasks and a timescale for implementation

This initial stage of planning led to a Service restructure which combined individual Centres into Consortium groupings. Six Consortia were created, each based on a geographical area and covering three or four Centres plus Special Provision, an arrangement which took account of then-current delivery and populations. Although at this stage Centres maintained individual budgets, by amalgamating financial information into Consortia for reporting purposes, sounder fiscal models were created as economies of scale helped the Service eradicate the deficits which some Centres had hitherto carried.

Towards coherent planning

By mid-1994, with the restructure in place - at least on paper - and with the first proper 'bid' to the FEFC accepted in full, the Service recognised that it would be sensible to bring in expertise to enable the implementation of a coherent planning cycle and at the same time enhance the skills of staff, some of whom had yet to fully act on newly devolved responsibilities. The Authority employed an external consultant to lead the Service through the next crucial stage.

The first meeting of the Service Team with the consultant focused on why planning might be needed, and drew on 'A Framework for the Future', FEFC guidance to colleges and drafts of Staff College material[1] to examine what Consortium-level planning might address, and what the plans might look like. Material produced following the event highlights participants' views that planning:

- provides clarification of purpose and direction
- minimises 'crisis management' and helps eliminate panic and duplication of activity; reduces the potential for management stress; provides professional security and confidence that things are moving in the 'right' direction
- helps managers (and staff) to see that huge goals are achievable by breaking them down into objectives and tasks

- provides a framework for accountability (to users, staff and the LEA); sets benchmarks against which efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery can be demonstrated; and acts as a yardstick for evaluation
- provides a focus, in the development of the plan, for team effort; implementation of the plan also enables personnel to work as a team by posing corporately-agreed service goals
- helps identify success (and thus boosts confidence and self-worth)
- forces prioritisation : 'you don't have to do everything, only that which goes into the plan'
- provides scope and focus for reflection on current professional practice, and allows creativity.

The meeting agreed that annual Consortium Development Plans should be produced - initially for the period April 1995-March 1996 but later revised, in the light of FEFC guidance on its strategic planning requirements from 'external institutions'[2], to August 1995-July 1996 - which would in turn inform the preparation of a formal Service Strategic Plan for the three-year period beginning August 1995. Each planning document would be structured to address the issues identified in Table 4.

By negotiation it was agreed that each section of the plan should address the current position within the Consortium; draw out the implications of this analysis; and set annual objectives, including where necessary specific (numeric) targets and deadlines. As to overall presentation, there was general agreement (and some relief!) that Consortium Development Plans should be slim, succinct documents, with the operational plans set out in tabular form.

This proved to be a major exercise, occasioning many drafts and frequent editorial intervention from the consultant. Slippage was inevitable as the process required time for staff to develop new skills and a more co-operative approach in working together. At the same time the

TABLE 4: INITIAL GUIDELINES ON CONSORTIUM DEVELOPMENT PLANS

- Service mission (a given)
- brief introduction explaining this is the first Consortium Development Plan, and outlining how it has been developed
- core aims of the Consortium (perhaps underpinned by an overt statement of values) - probably needs to be discussed at ACE Forum meeting
- context: a section which uses available information - from BCC Planning Department, TECs, Employment Services etc - to set the socio-economic context in which the Consortium operates, which can in turn lead to an indication of what this implies; to include reference to national issues and trends
- over-arching strategy, which should stem from the aims and from the needs analysis which underpins the 'context' section; general strategic objectives might usefully follow the groupings below:
- curriculum
  - access and participation
  - physical resources - accommodation/equipment (inc.wider use)
  - marketing
  - links with other agencies (inc. with other Consortia, and 'external' agencies)
  - guidance
  - staffing (inc. separate sections on teaching staff and administrative staff)
  - training (perhaps as a sub-section of 'staffing')
  - quality and customer care
  - budget (maybe including developments in
  - MIS/monitoring)
  - internal developments (eg. communications, team-building, processes of needs analysis)
- review of where you're at now, coupled with a summary of what the Consortium has done in response to the various development intentions outlined in 'A Framework for the Future'; could include a summary in terms of current strengths and weaknesses as you see them
- operational plans (showing what, by when, who has responsibility, and what resources will be needed, together with an indication of how progress will be monitored/measured) arising out of each strand of the strategy - follow the same headings

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Service was tackling the major transformation caused by the introduction of more comprehensive record-keeping - including the specification, tendering, purchase and installation of an integrated MIS system - and still delivering a curriculum that was beginning to benefit from the research and effort put in by the staff.

Those conversant with FEFC demands will realise that at the same time that Consortia were coming to terms with local-level planning (November 1994 onwards) commentary was expected to support the 1995/96 FEFC funding bid (January 1995). Early work on Consortium Plans, garnered through a series of Service Team meetings and a working group comprising representatives of each Consortium, LEA officers and our consultant, was used to inform that commentary, which in turn was used to further inform final drafting of the Consortium Development Plans. This exercise has subsequently led to the formalisation of a planning cycle which revolves around four key documents:

1 a Service Development Plan, approved by the County Council ACE Panel: this sets the policy framework for a three-year period, and is next due for review in 1997

2 annual Consortium Development Plans, prepared each Spring for a twelve-month period beginning the following August. The main purpose of these plans is to reflect the ways in which local activity will tie in with overarching Service strategy; they however have a formative relationship with Service-wide planning since early drafts of Consortium plans inform preparation of the Service's annual funding application to FEFC, while local assessment of priorities - and what is realistically achievable - will influence the updating of short-term corporate objectives

3 the annual FEFC funding application submitted in February each year: preparation of supporting documentation, together with the FEFC response (expected in April each

year), sets the context for Consortium Development Plans and informs the three year Strategic Plan or its annual update

4 the three-year Service Strategic Plan (of which 1995/98 is the first): to be updated annually and substantially reviewed/revised triennially in the light of County Council policy, this outlines short- and medium-term corporate objectives.

The inter-relationship of these documents, and the formative review of progress against stated objectives which - now that the documents exist - informs future planning, is critical.

Budget planners will understand the potential confusion in this cycle, cutting across Local Authority year (April-March), FEFC year (August-July) and ESF year (January-December). This is still a major issue that needs addressing, although to date our cycle, and the accompanying hard work, has paid off. Although we receive our FEFC funding through three sponsoring colleges we took a very early decision to present the same commentary with each bid, and our three-year Strategic Plan is a whole-Service plan which does not differentiate between 'Schedule 2' and 'Non-Schedule 2' activity.

In the light of experience in introducing Consortium Development Planning in 1994/95 and preparation of the three-year strategic plan the Service has formalised its planning cycle. By agreeing this cycle with the staff it has firmly set the process of planning within a framework.

What results from planning

There is no doubt that the profile of Adult Continuing Education has been raised considerably by these exercises, within the County Council and more widely. All stages have required consultation both within the Authority and with an increasing number of external agencies. Our image is changing from a set of disparate outlets, that provides 'part-

time education that might or might not run', into a professional, integrated Service that is increasingly being seen to deliver.

The 'dependence culture' of ACE on other education providers, especially schools (for accommodation) and colleges (for curriculum planning), is changing to a more constructive partnership approach. We can now go into negotiations armed with clear and accurate information, and in the knowledge of what our future needs will be. The potentially destructive and competitive funding methodology adopted by the FEFC has gradually been seen in a more positive light, and one of our more satisfactory challenges has been to work co-operatively with our competitors, especially in respect of enhanced progression opportunities for adult learners.

Planning has created a series of benchmarks against which it is possible to assess and evaluate the progress of the Service. It is an ideal platform to inform - at times, perhaps, to confound - agencies to which we are in some way accountable, whether they be local, multi-agency ACE Forums associated with each Consortium, County Council, FEFC, TEC or HMI. Our planning has certainly alerted elected members to the potential corporate benefit that ACE can bring to the authority; we are now seen by the Chief Education Officer and the Chief Executive as a positive player in achieving a range of corporate strategies. We are now able, with some certainty, to present a case - and back it up - to potential funding partners and would-be collaborators: our 'external business' has increased dramatically in the last two years.

When facing the challenge of major budget changes a coherent planning cycle has enabled the Service to plan in a logical way rather than by making knee-jerk reactions. We have, within the period described above, gone through an exercise which resulted in several voluntary redundancies and further staffing re-alignment, yet have been able to sustain enrolments, deliver an ever-broadening range of provision, achieve all FEFC targets, undertake franchised work for partner colleges and attract external funding.

One should not however underestimate the amount of time that should be allowed if planning is to form an integral part of Service activity rather than be imposed 'from on high'. It must be formulated with and through the staff at all levels, and this can be very costly and time consuming. Once a systematic approach to planning is in place the question of communication needs to be tackled. We have realised that although the plan is 'owned' by the Service there is a long way to go in ensuring all our staff are part of the cycle of formulation-implementation-monitoring-review. How do you get 1500+ part-time employees to feel part of the process? If you don't, can you properly claim to have a strategy document that is owned and acted upon in a corporate way?

Bringing on board all key staff has been a difficult operation; inevitably some staff will become blockers, others will wish to change career directions, yet more will require significant support. It has been important to ensure that mechanisms are in place to face all such challenges.

We continue to fear that budgetary constraints will force the process to become less consultative and therefore less valued. That in itself could threaten the survival of a corporate ACE Service. But our Service now believes that the planning process has in itself created hope. There is a strategy in place which will assist us in developing the Service's full potential to deliver meaningful learning opportunities for adults. Planning has placed us on the map, and created a better team spirit. Certainly the Service is now recognised for its professionalism, and we are sure will lead to an enhancement of a co-ordinated adult learning provision in the community. In the end our planning should directly benefit the client. But we will not be sitting still - to be effective, the planning process must be a continuum.

Postscript: an ever-changing planning context

Having established the planning cycle described above, and with processes in place to allow for Service-wide contributions to the annual review of strategic objectives and Consortium-level planning, the Service is now preparing for further change. A second phase of voluntary redundancies will take effect from September 1996, rendering the existing six-Consortium Service arrangement unviable. At least one of our sponsoring FE colleges is seeking a 'strategic alliance' in the light of its own seeming failure to achieve FEFC targets. Further the outcome of the Local Government Review of Buckinghamshire means that, from April 1997, Milton Keynes will become a unitary authority. As a consequence the County Council is carrying out a process of 'realignment' to accommodate its new - smaller, more rurally-focused - format; the Service has been asked to undertake a further review to take account of the 'new' Buckinghamshire and produce a Service development plan for the period 1997-2000; and because of the reorganisation of the county FEFC has asked for a full Strategic Plan for the two years 1996-1998. Nobody said life was easy!

The Service is attempting to respond, at speed and with some uncertainty, but with a positive outlook to these various changes. With further help from our external consultant, we have agreed and are preparing to implement revised planning arrangements:

- a report on progress against each set of Consortium Objectives 1995/96 will be prepared by the end of May, to be used both to report within Consortia and to inform the review of Service Objectives 1995/96 which will need to be included within the FEFC plan due in July. Consortia have been asked to draw on ACE Forum members in preparation of their report; all Consortia are expected to present the information in their report to the relevant Forum - the format for this presentation is left to local discretion

- forward preparation of Consortium planning objectives for 1996/97 will now not be undertaken until over-arching Service Objectives have been agreed for the period to July 1998
- Service Objectives for 1996/97 and to July 1998 will be developed during June, and be subject to consultation both within the Service and externally prior to inclusion in the updated Strategic Plan. They will be set within the current Service Aims and follow the structure used for the Strategic Plan 1995/1998. Drafting will be informed by a current 'position audit' exercise, due to report by the end of March; data distilled from Autumn and Spring Terms 1995/96 (updating Autumn 1995 data already available); Consortium reports on 1995/96 activity; initial feedback from OFSTED on an ongoing HMI inspection of the Service, due to report in May; and such other information as can be generated, including TEC forecasts and employment-sector trends, demographic projections and informed opinion from the field
- once agreed, Service Objectives for 1996/97 will inform preparation of local action plans by each Consortium/Area within the Service. These will be developed in the light of local assessment of what can sensibly be done within the prevailing resource context, and translate the Service Objectives into statements of operational intent. Action plans will adopt the structure of the Service Objectives and are expected to be specific, including:
  - local targets and corresponding indicators
  - an indication of resources (budget allocation) required to implement proposed action
  - an indication of who will take lead responsibility for each action

- timescales.

  Workplans cannot be drafted until Service Objectives have been finalised; they should, however, be available in final form by the end of September.

All of this is far from ideal. Timescales are both rushed and concentrated; key strategic information will need to be generated, assessed and relayed at times when Service personnel are of necessity involved in a range of operational matters (not least programme publication and distribution, preparation for summer-time enrolment and the recruitment of part-time teaching staff); planning will potentially be distracted by external factors, including a formal inspection and in all probability the need for audit of FEFC activity; final decisions regarding adult education will not have been taken by the 'shadow' Milton Keynes Authority in time to inform our planning.

We will, however, be able to plan in a proactive manner. Rather than being 'told' what to do by the County Council, the Service is being encouraged to advance its own proposals for development. We have been asked to lead in negotiations with our prospective 'partner' college on the envisaged strategic alliance. We are able to take account of, and adjust to, staff reductions. We are able to seek external funding to implement our own vision, rather than divert activity to accommodate funders' requirements. Above all, we believe that, as a unified and coherent Service with a clear sense of the contribution we can make to developing lifelong learning in the county, we are positioned to respond flexibly and with some confidence to the pressures placed upon us. It may not be an ideal model but it certainly provides us with a framework within which we can take pragmatic decisions about our own future - and one which is beginning to produce results.

Notes

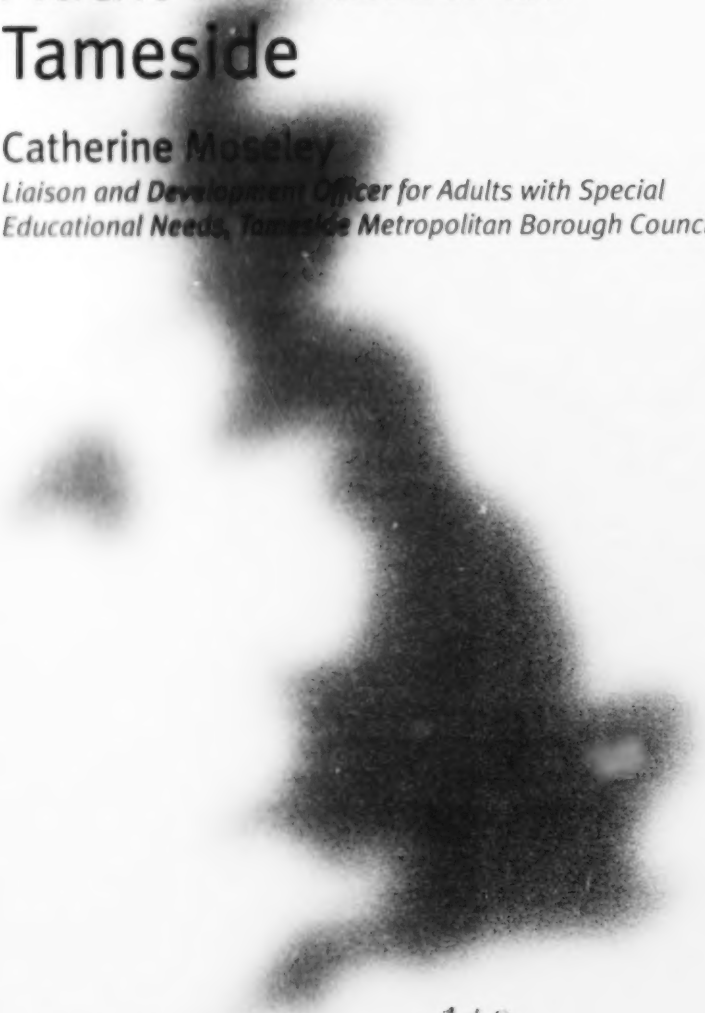
1 *Later published as Strategic Planning for adult education, Mendip Paper MP074, by Pablo Foster and Bob Powell; The Staff College, 1994*

2 *The pertinent document, published in January 1995, was FEFC Circular 95/03: External Institutions' Strategic Plans 1995/96 to 1997/98'*

118

Strategic Funding of Adult Provision at Tameside

Catherine Moseley
Liaison and Development Officer for Adults with Special Educational Needs, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council



119

Tameside is a metropolitan borough lying within the Greater Manchester conurbation. The Authority serves a population of some 221,600, with just over 7% of residents being from ethnic minority groups; in particular, there are large Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities within Tameside.

Provision for adults managed by the Borough has grown up historically from needs identified within various Local Authority Departments. In 1991, for financial reasons alone, three centres - Loxley House Day Centre and Morningside Further Education Centre, both managed by the Social Services Department, and the Women's Technology and Enterprise Centre (WOTEC), managed by the Department of Economic and Property Services - were formally designated by the Council as Centres where education took place. This enabled the Authority to generate enhancement of the Rate Support Grant through the Non-FESR NAFE (Non-Further Education Statutory Return Non Advanced Further Education) grant criteria. The FHE Act (1992) led to much of this work being identified as 'Schedule 2', and so eligible for FEFC funding; by 1995/96, this amounted to some £669,000 worth of provision.

The Centres

Loxley House is a Social Services Day Care Centre for adults with physical disabilities. Service users are offered the opportunity to access personal care, social activities and adult education. Many Loxley House users wanted to access further education, but were constrained from doing so due to their support needs. It was decided, in conjunction with Tameside College, to bring some 'Schedule 2' education provision to the service users at Loxley House, using the facilities on site. The programme that is offered has thus grown out of a constructive collaboration between visiting lecturers and the Centre staff. This collaboration has been successful for a number of years, and users value it and wish it to continue. The Centre is looking at ways of expanding the current range of provision.

The aim of Morningside is to provide further education for students with learning difficulties which is equal in quality and value to that at any other educational institution, thus offering equal opportunities for those students who require a more supportive environment. The service complements that of Tameside College for people with severe learning disabilities and moderate learning disabilities.

WOTEC aims to provide high quality training for women in the fields of Information Technology and Basic Electronics in a supportive atmosphere, and to enhance the employment prospects of mature women with little or no qualifications through further education. It is committed to providing a complete training environment for women by complementing vocational skills training with personal skills development; removing the barriers that impede women's access to training by waiving child care cost and gearing its courses to school hours and school holidays; and providing a supportive environment for women by placing high priority on counselling support to trainees.

The three centres became partly FEFC-funded, with sponsorship from Tameside College, in 1993.

Developing Coherence

A Post-16 Adult Education (Disabilities) Strategy Group was informally established in the Borough in 1991. This tried to create greater coherence for the respective roles of Tameside College, the Social Services and Education Departments in respect of adults with special educational needs.

The Strategy Group assumed more strategic significance following college incorporation. Its multi-agency membership, with representatives from Social Services, Education, Economic and Property Services, Internal Audit and Tameside College, allowed the Group to consider issues relating to strategic development. In particular, the Strategy Group was able to make recommendations on the re-

investment of grant income to protect and expand existing programmes and to co ordinate returns to the FEFC.

During the course of Group discussions concerning separate submissions for funding and wide-ranging consideration of future developments, it became clear that it would be both simpler and more productive to form a Consortium bringing together various activities in the three Centres. This approach, it was thought, would also allow for the consolidation and possible expansion of grant income. A consortium arrangement with the FEFC would allow for the single submission of funding bids and the efficient supply of increasingly complex amounts of information. It would also allow for a more integrated and credible communication system with the FEFC. The Group therefore proposed that the Authority form a Consortium for the purposes of strategic planning and development of provision for adults within Tameside.

The Consortium and its Groupings

Tameside Consortium was accordingly established in August 1995 in response to a growing need for coherence between the Schedule 2 providers within the Authority. Its adopted mission statement is:

> *to provide quality further education and training for the adult population of Tameside who may experience barriers in accessing education, training and employment through economic disadvantage or special educational needs, that meets their educational needs, through a multi agency approach, in a variety of locations and settings.*

The Council identified a range of benefits from the Consortium arrangement:

- it would highlight the Council's strategic interest and commitment, thereby increasing its credibility with FEFC
- it would allow for considerable flexibility in terms of negating any shortfall in achieved target units at particular establishments

- it would result in a much lower aggregate average level of funding (ALF), and so provide a secure basis for future funded growth
- it would allow for the development of new initiatives within the Consortium framework without the need to risk new, separate submissions at the Demand Led Element rate of £6.50.

In order to ensure that the independence and integrity of the Consortium's constituent 'external institutions' was retained, each Centre would still be responsible for day-to day management and administration of their provision. All FEFC returns would be prepared by the Centres and then collated centrally to create one submission to the FEFC.

Tameside LEA appointed a Liaison and Development Officer in April 1995, who acts as a central resource for all Authority-managed provision. This officer has a responsibility to liaise with Centres and advise on issues relating to education programmes, curriculum development for adult learners, FEFC requirements and funding issues. The Liaison and Development Officer works closely with the Education Finance section of the Council so that FEFC returns and statistics are centrally collated, and are as accurate as possible. The Authority has found that having an officer with an overall insight and day-to-day involvement with the Centres is invaluable in terms of improving mutual understanding, raising expectations and breaking down restrictive attitudes and structures.

The formation of the Consortium in August 1995 led to the Authority submitting only one strategic plan to the FEFC. This allowed a multi-disciplinary, cross-Departmental approach to strategic planning. Although the focus of the plan was FEFC-fundable Schedule 2 provision, the Consortium approach allowed the plan to take an overall view and thus reflect many areas of education and training for adults within the Borough. The Consortium Strategic Plan was developed from contributions from Departments of Education, Social Services, Economic

and Property Services, Leisure and Recreation, Finance and the Chief Executive's Department and the local Health Authority. This led to a much wider ownership and awareness of the importance of cohesive strategic planning for education and training for the Borough. There has been a greater level of inter-departmental co-operation as a result.

The Consortium is accountable to the Council. There is a commitment to report to the Council on an annual basis regarding on-going work and future plans. To help facilitate development and also to tackle any issues that may arise, the Consortium has a Strategy Group and a Working Group.

The Consortium Strategy Group (CSG) has a membership that comprises an elected member from each of the three relevant committees, the Assistant Directors of Education, Social Services, Finance and Economic and Property Services, the Equal Opportunities (Disabilities) Officer, the Liaison and Development Officer for Adults with Special Educational Needs and a representative from our sponsoring college. The CSG meets on a quarterly basis. The remit of the Group is to:

- devise and monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan
- oversee linkages between the Strategic Plan, the Authority's economic regeneration strategy and provision of non-vocational education
- receive minutes from the Consortium Working Group
- oversee the re-investment programme with the Director of Finance
- receive reports on external evaluations and inspections
- oversee the punctual presentation and submission of plans, statistics and information to those having authority to require them
- review the Strategic Plan annually and accompany it with a re-investment policy for the following year.

The Consortium Working Group (CWG) has a membership that comprises the Heads of Centres, their line managers, the Liaison and Development Officer for Adults with Special Needs and representatives from the Finance sections of the relevant departments. The CWG meets on a six-weekly basis and reports to the Consortium Strategy Group. The remit of the group is to:

- implement the Strategic Plan and its objectives
- monitor the achievement of target units
- monitor and explain administrative requirements
- report developing strategic issues to the Consortium Strategy Group
- consider, recommend, implement and monitor the re-investment programme
- provide a reporting structure for delivery inputs from outside agencies
- act as a forum for dissemination of information
- act as an awareness-raising forum regarding FEFC and OFSTED requirements
- act as a professional development forum
- carry out feasibility studies and provide comments on proposals arising from the Consortium Strategy Group
- look for alternative sources of funding.

The Consortium feels it is essential to retain a multi-disciplinary approach to education and training within the Authority. Consequently our sponsoring College is involved at all levels. The Consortium sub-contracts the college to provide Schedule 2 inputs at two of the Centres in the Consortium; Tameside College also provides 'non vocational' adult education for Borough residents. There is a College representative on the Consortium Strategy Group so that our sponsoring body is kept fully aware of on-going and future developments. While both the

Consortium and the College recognise the importance of FEFC growth targets, our collaboration has meant that there is a willingness on both sides to avoid competing for the same market. This avoidance of conflict is recognised as being an essential ingredient in retaining a cohesive approach.

A Strategic Approach

The future of the Consortium and its provision has a healthy outlook. There is a commitment from all involved to develop the role of the Consortium and its Centres in ways which draw on the expertise of the staff involved whilst attempting to address identified needs. The formation of the Consortium has enabled the protection of more vulnerable areas of provision, and has also facilitated new initiatives. A new vocational course focusing on assisting adults with mental health problems to gain occupational skills is to be established from September 1996.

The Consortium is contributing to Authority-wide regeneration strategies. 'First Step', for example, is a TEC-managed project funded from the Single Regeneration Budget which provides guidance and support for those at particular disadvantage in the labour market. In particular, project activity is targeted at people from minority ethnic communities, those with disabilities and women returners. The work is mainly outreach-based on a sessional basis. It is one of the Consortium's strategic objectives to use the services of 'First Step' to give current FEFC-funded students training and education guidance and support.

The formation of a Consortium has enabled the Centres to develop an overall quality assurance policy which is fed by institutional quality documents and approaches. Whilst each Centre caters for very different client groups, staff within the Consortium recognise that there are many areas of commonality in the delivery and quality of provision. This will be reflected in an over-arching Consortium quality assurance policy, currently under development.

The Consortium has strong corporate objectives. Currently (1995/96) these include:

- to formalise a method of continuing to evaluate and respond to the needs of students, trainees and service users; where appropriate, this will be linked to the labour market
- to explore the possibility of introducing new provision to meet the identified needs of students, trainees and service users
- to continue to foster good relations with external agencies and to expand existing relationships
- to explore ways of sharing good practice within the Consortium and the Local Authority
- to maintain the excellent retention and achievement rates across the Consortium
- to explore the possibility of expanding local employer participation with pre vocational and vocational courses
- to identify equipment and software needs in line with current developments in new technology and explore the possibility of upgrading current equipment.

The current plan also includes three specific targets to be met by the end of the year:

- to explore the possibility of widening education participation by adults with physical disabilities
- to research into gaps in training provision for women in Tameside and explore the demand for either a higher level IT/Business Admin course for women or an enterprise training course for older women
- to explore the possibility of widening education participation for adults with learning difficulties by increasing the number of specialist courses offered.

The Consortium has given a louder and more concerted voice to the adult education providers within the Authority. There is no longer a disparate group of providers, but a strong and powerful alliance that shares a commitment to adult education within the Borough. The involvement of elected members on the Consortium Strategy Group means that there is greater awareness throughout the Authority of the education and training needs of the adults of Tameside. This brings with it an inbuilt willingness to tackle these needs from within existing resources, and a preparedness to seek additional resources to further the service available.

Essential Skills for Adults in Stockport

Sue Hasty
*Co-ordinator, **Stopford Open Learning** Centre, Stockport MBC*

The provision of basic skills tuition for adults in Stockport has, as in other LEA managed services, progressed through many phases since its origins. Its developmental periods have mirrored the concerns and issues at large in wider society, and the Service has consistently sought to address the needs of those with the greatest disadvantage. Resources have been targeted at a range of priority population groups: the young and older unemployed, those socially excluded, single parents and people surviving on low incomes.

A Brief History

To understand the current thinking behind the structure and organisation of Stockport's Basic Skills Service we need to trace its origins to examine the aims and values from its inception, and how these influenced the nature and style of delivery over the years.

The 'Stockport Literacy Project' came into being in April 1974, having been previously funded by three-year Urban Aid Grant under the management of the then Manchester and Salford Council of Social Service. Following local government reorganisation Stockport's Local Authority boundary was considerably enlarged; and with financial backing from the Stockport Metropolitan District, the then Adult Literacy Resource Agency, the Urban Programme and the Job Creation Programme, the project was handed over to the Stockport and District Council of Social Service. A report compiled by this agency in October 1973[1] opened with the scenario:

> *The adult illiterate is an unhappy casualty of our social system, crippled by a shameful, hidden wound that cannot heal of itself, and the fact that most people assume that we live in a totally literate society makes the life of the adult illiterate more anxious and sometimes more bitter.*

This well-meaning if patriarchal proclamation gave early indication that there was both a desire and a need to have a localised service for those Stockport residents 'needing individual help in improving their reading

and writing skills'. At this time the emphasis was on the provision of literacy tuition only, and the format was largely based on one-to-one volunteer tutor/student links within the home environment. There were, however, also nine 'reading centres' throughout the Borough.

During the late 1970's the range of available provision flourished, spurred by the 'On the Move' series and an influx of funding from the LEA. Supplemented by resources from the Manpower Services Commission, staffing levels were increased and the basic education curriculum expanded into offering numeracy and English as a Second Language. With the addition of a Youth Literacy Project, basic skills tuition reached adults and young people from across the borough and gave a choice of studying within their own community or at town-centre accommodation.

At this time the Secretary of State for Education indicated that, with regard to adult literacy:

> *... much remains to be discovered and done. The Government is glad to have been able to continue its special central help in the two financial years 1976-78. In the longer term, however, it is important to build on the foundations which have already been laid, to integrate Adult Literacy tuition into local provision for adult education for as long as it is needed*[2].

The Local Authoritry responded accordingly, and by the mid 1980's Stockport had seen further expansion in basic skills provision. Substantially resourced by the LEA, this growth was helped by additional funding for pilot and developmental projects from the European Social Fund and the then Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. This enabled Stockport to pilot many creative and varied basic skills projects, signifying a turning point in the style and delivery of basic skills provision as well as offering greater choice.

Project Activity

The projects were established under the philosophy that basic education was wider than the traditional concept of literacy, language and numeracy tuition allowed. Rather, Stockport saw such work as including 'those skills required to enable an adult to live in, and contribute towards an integrated society'[1]. Funded by ALBSU and originating from ESF-funded research findings which identified gaps in the existing provision, the Women's Basic Education Project and the Basic Education Project for Unemployed Adults aimed to build on earlier work. These piloted the local delivery of provision and extended the traditional curriculum to include 'basic personal skills such as self-confidence and the ability to cope with everyday occurrences'. Significant developments included:

- location in the community via youth clubs, family centres and neighbourhood units
- establishment of an 'educational advice worker for adults' post
- the piloting of learning support at Stockport College
- the introduction of computer literacy programmes linked to basic education
- an extension of the basic skills curriculum to encompass social and personal development aspects which had previously been incidental.

Although many of the projects were short-term funded they served the purpose of pump-priming initiatives. Whilst the money has long since disappeared the effects of this period of innovation have been far reaching, with many of the ideas now firmly embedded into the infrastructure of current basic skills provision for adults.

Formal recognition and enhanced practice

Under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, basic skills became recognised for the first time as statutory provision. Whilst the acknowledgement that basic skills was an essential and important part of the curriculum for adults was welcomed, the funding appeared initially to have many strings attached to it. However, FEFC requirements, and the funding methodology emphasis on stages of learning and goal-focused individual study programmes, has over time served to sharpen our basic skills practice by embedding many of the processes which were previously carried out on an ad hoc basis:

- initial interviewing and assessment of learners
- ongoing assessment
- access to accreditation
- encouraging student progression through guidance

are all aspects of our practice which have been reviewed, evaluated and enhanced in Stockport in the FEFC era.

Inclusion of this area of work in the 'Schedule 2' national priority listing, together with the development of the Basic Skills Agency's Quality Kitemark, has given the whole curriculum area of basic skills its own definition. Perhaps for the first time, practitioners and managers have become fully aware of the standards towards which they should be working.

Recent Developments and Future Options

The last three years have signified an evaluative phase for Stockport's Basic Skills Service. We have found many new arenas in which to deliver the curriculum, as well as further developing the more traditional centre-based learning. What we now have to consider is the extent to which we can fulfil our ambitions within available funding parameters. We need to make decisions around whether to consolidate the practice

which we are good at, and achieve growth within that, or to diversify within basic skills in order to attract new client groups. Although both options are desirable, in the end it would entail a fine juggling act for substantial growth to occur within the current available staffing and resources. It is therefore essential that targets set for the future are realistic and based on thorough research of the untapped markets we know to be in existence.

Encouraged by FEFC requirements, the Service has produced a formal strategic plan, and in so doing has been enabled to take stock of its aims, objectives and values once more and to project where we want to be and what we want to deliver in the future. In creating the vision we have examined a number of trends which are being highlighted for future basic skills development:

- open learning delivery
- family literacy
- basic skills in the workplace
- learning with the aid of new technology
- short course delivery.

We have matched these trends and desired goals with our own aims and values, and assessed what is realistically achievable within available resources, to identify the directions in which we need to travel.

Staffing

The Service has recently undergone major staffing changes which have allowed us to evaluate current job descriptions and staff roles. The resulting infrastructure equips us to effectively implement and develop areas of the curriculum as well as the whole learner experience from initial interviewing to accreditation and progression. Whilst all staff have a substantial teaching commitment, some now have specific additional responsibilities ensuring that major basic skills development areas will be addressed in the life of the current strategic plan. There are

now staff in place who will take the lead in basic skills short courses and community links; family literacy; computer assisted learning; guidance and progression; and open learning delivery. In the future it is hoped that basic skills in the workplace will be a further area for growth: this is targeted as a priority objective for the next strategic plan.

Location and Styles of Provision

The Service reorganisation has also widened the choice of learning styles available for the prospective learner. We have a town-centre building which is the ideal location to site a flexible basic skills workshop, accommodating group sessions, drop-in sessions, short courses and independent study. In addition we are gradually introducing computer-assisted learning approaches as and when resources permit. This often means being on the lookout for other establishments who are upgrading their own equipment and thus have hardware surplus to their own requirements - but being within the Local Authority means that there are many establishments to choose from. We not only liaise with the schools, but also with other divisions within the Authority which may be discarding slightly out-of-date equipment which is perfectly adequate for our purposes.

To complement the town-centre based accommodation we have a number of outreach locations throughout Stockport, based particularly in the most disadvantaged or more isolated parts of the Borough. These bases are the product of much of the community development work which was undertaken in the 1980's; continued partnership working and close liaison with other statutory and voluntary agencies ensures that we can go some way to meeting the needs of those who wish to study within their own community. We have found that our 'external institution' status has enabled us to respond with a flexibility and speed to requests for group or individual tuition in the community than college-based services are unable to match.

We have become more selective in which o :treach centres we choose to base our provision in, as we would wish to offer the same quality of

service in terms of access to materials and resources as could be expected at the main site. Written into the strategic plan, therefore, is the recommendation that we review our existing bases and seek out other, more appropriate premises. Indeed, because many of our adult education centres are situated in schools we are in a good position to negotiate simply a swapping of rooms for basic skills sessions into a base which has access to information technology.

Competition and Collaboration

LEA adult education institutions, and particularly adult basic education providers, have a long-established history of serving the needs of local communities and of fostering successful working relationships with other agencies. Building on these partnerships should stand us in good stead in seeking access to funds or grants which emphasise partnership working. In this, we have found there are many advantages of belonging to an LEA-managed organisation; we can translate Authority partnerships into core Service strengths, and have highlighted this aspect of our work for further future development.

In Stockport we have made a conscious decision to market basic skills as first-step, locally based provision. Complemented by a well-organised guidance service and good relationships with all the major education and training providers in the area, we are able to offer a service which plays to our strengths, meets the needs of people wishing to return to study initially within a familiar locality, and provides a springboard for a clear and smooth transition into further study.

We see particular advantage in making other further education providers aware of what the Basic Skills Service offers and how and where it is done: they recognise that we are working with their potential future client groups, and are keen to help. The established good relationships with other institutions means everyone is clear about boundaries. We can - and do - work together, both to achieve our separate goals and achieve and secure FEFC targets and funding; this is

a winning combination — but the most significant 'winner' from this approach is the adult learner.

The future, on paper, seems and in some aspects is developing into a highly competitive one. There are, however, positive effects in this: competition forces the Service to sit up, review practices and focus on the quality of learning for adults. In order to maintain quality it is important to recognise the strengths that LEA-managed, locally focused, community-based 'external institutions' have developed during their lifetime as adult basic skills providers, and to market these effectively to the client and to other education and training institutions. We need to build a future, even if it can only be at a local level, based on co-operation rather than competition so that everyone can benefit.

Notes

1 *'Development of the Literacy Project 1974'; Stockport Council of Social Service, October 1973*

2 *Quoted in a Report of the Director of Education on the Stockport Literacy Project; Stockport MBC, undated*

3 *Report from the Research and Information Service; Stockport MBC, June 1984*

Women's Education in Rochdale

Jane Black
Principal Community Education Officer (Adult Education), Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

138

Part-time, locally delivered adult education has always attracted proportionately more women than other sectors of further education. The reasons for this are well known, relating both to the appropriateness of the curriculum on offer and the accessibility of provision. Part-time learning enables women to develop at their own pace, fitting studying around other commitments, often over a period of some years. Locally provided adult education has particularly suited the rhythms of many women's lives. Although it is part of a process of change and development for women, adult education has at the same time appeared a 'safe', even acceptable choice for women to make.

Whilst many women follow traditional adult education programmes - typically accounting for 70%+ of reported enrolments in general adult education - new forms of women's education have also grown up over the last 25 years, often through pioneering project activity in the voluntary sector (where the WEA has had a particularly significant role). This work, much of which has direct links with a more radical adult education tradition, has proved attractive to women who may not previously have had access to formal education since leaving school. Women's education in a Local Authority context may ostensibly seem less explicitly pioneering or radical than the work developed in the voluntary sector. However, it can be possible to develop this work within local authorities along very similar principles: such has been the case in adult education in Rochdale.

The Rochdale Context

Falling within the remit of the Recreation and Community Services Department, adult education is delivered both through adult education centres and via a number of community schools; the single FE college in the borough also contracts for some 'Non Schedule 2' activity. Adult Education's location within the Authority allows for direct links - at policy and operational levels - with a range of community-oriented front-line services, including children's services, sports and leisure, libraries and information services. The Council has a general policy of

devolved decision-making and local diversity which is particularly relevant to community schools. Between the various provider outlets it has been possible to develop a mixture of provision, combining borough-wide planning and local accountability.

Rochdale has the second smallest population of all the Greater Manchester metropolitan authorities, but covers the second largest geographical area. Adult education courses are accessible geographically to many parts of this area, using up to 72 individual venues, of which around 20 are main centres.

For some time women's education has been one of the cornerstones of the Borough's adult education programme. Figures tell us that women are everywhere within the Service - some 78% of current students are women - but they are also directly and specifically catered for in targeted work. The rationale for this comes not only from our current student profile, but also from our analysis of national and local labour market trends, and our assessment of our distinctive strengths as a provider compared to the local college sector.

Curriculum Priorities within Rochdale Adult Education

The Council's 1995/98 Strategic Plan for Adult Learning in Rochdale lists a number of priorities:

- community-based accreditation opportunities should be available at a range of dispersed locations
- progression routes should link informal and formal learning opportunities
- basic skills and return to learning programmes
- family literacy and parent education
- women returners' courses, in particular office skills and information technology
- childcare training

- courses targeted at the Asian communities
- GCSE and Open College accredited humanities programmes.

These priorities appear well-suited to the perceived needs of many women returning to adult education. We aim to combine them with flexible timing, local venues, childcare, guidance and learner support. Fees are relatively low, both within the region and nationally (1995/96 standard fees are based on £1.25 per hour for 'non vocational' and 72p for 'vocational' courses). The Service ethos is therefore designed to be a woman-friendly one. As well as seeking to broaden access and participation overall, we in particular target resources and energy into reaching new groups of women learners.

Women's Education - some examples from Rochdale

Three examples may serve to draw out some of the features of the work undertaken with women as learners. These are samples, not intended to give a comprehensive picture of current work in Rochdale, nor of women's education programmes as a whole.

Information Technology

Courses in wordprocessing and information technology are heavily dominated by women. Typing and book-keeping continue to run, but to a far lesser extent than hitherto. During 1995/96 the standard range of wordprocessing qualifications has broadened to include a more diverse range of computing skills, including desktop publishing. Courses are held daytime and evenings, with childcare facilities available at most daytime venues. Three main adult education centres and four community schools have IT facilities, and some smaller venues are also used; some sites now have new or upgraded equipment; one is used mainly by women from the local Asian community.

This work has come a long way from the typing and office skills courses of a few years ago. Women may initially seek to return to this area of

education because they want an office job, but the Service also supports them to broaden their aspirations and skills, so that they may make other choices. During 1994 the Service ran an ESF funded 'Fresh Start' programme combining IT skills, basic education and women's studies; still today, many women choose a mixed portfolio of courses when they enrol.

The majority of tutors in this area are women, which helps considerably to demystify the technology and give students confidence in their ability to learn.

Basic Skills

The Service has always offered a broad programme of basic skills work; as elsewhere within the programme, women have been a significant majority. In recent years new work has developed which has reached women in particular and which has offered a range of new access points and progression opportunities for them. In particular this has included work with Asian women, family literacy and parent education.

Bilingual basic skills programmes were offered through a Section 11-funded project which ended in March 1995. Also under development in early 1995 was a programme of family literacy work helped by small grants from the Basic Skills Agency (formerly ALBSU). Both pots of money helped to develop courses in local primary schools and community centres, the former supported by a team of home-school liaison workers with bilingual skills. The family literacy programmes worked with parents and children together, also with parents separately. This work has now moved into the Education Department but we collaborate closely, funding and supporting the adult education dimension of the programme, which currently has 65 students enrolled.

The value of this work is that it enables the Service to reach women where they are, and to build upon issues that they readily identify with, in particular their children's education. From that starting point, we

offer them the opportunity to gain accreditation for themselves; for many this will lead onto other learning opportunities.

Childcare training

Rochdale's siting of its Children's Services Team within Recreation & Community Services, rather than within Social Services, has afforded particular opportunity for creative collaboration. This began in 1993 when some training courses were set up for childminders. The work has expanded to include courses for play and creche workers, and courses aimed at school lunchtime supervisors.

There have been two related aims in developing this work. The first is to meet the immediate education and training needs identified by these students, practically all women; secondly, adult education aims to support them in making subsequent learning choices. Students might opt to gain further training in childcare, or to enrol on courses in other subject areas. Many women take up part-time, and usually low paid, work with children because of its convenience in their lives at a time when their own children are small - or perhaps because they perceive that is all they can do. Part-time workers, many of whom are women, are an often overlooked sector when it comes to gaining access to training (McGivney, 1994). These courses are designed to assist participants to gain broad skills and confidence, and to identify more clearly what their next step might be. We have already begun to run a 'Training the Trainers' course to encourage some of these women to acquire a training qualification so they can act as course tutors on future courses. Hence a learning opportunity can also be a new employment opportunity.

Issues to consider

Funding

FEFC funding has undoubtedly created new opportunities for us to expand in all of the above areas. Two years of funded growth have

allowed the Service to introduce new courses and develop a more coherent framework for accreditation. Experience has been that it is possible to work with the FEFC funding methodology to broaden womens' learning opportunities: the Rochdale 1995/98 Strategic Plan indicates that 'we are confident that we have the experience and the expertise to take on further developments in this area'. External institutions, many with proven track records of success and established community bases, are often far better placed than a large college to attract adult women.

A merely opportunistic approach is not enough. Jane Thompson suggests that 'women have increasingly become the "targets" in new and expanding education markets. The attempts which many of us made, and the classes we pioneered in the 80's, in order to make "really useful knowledge" accessible to "disadvantaged" groups, especially working class and black women, have now become an industry' (Thompson, 1995).

This history of money-chasing - with strings attached - is nothing new to those committed to developing women's education. Rochdale is finding that the opportunities afforded by FEFC funding to implement our priorities - broaden the curriculum, fund more free places, expand childcare, improve facilities and improve the guidance and learner support we offer - require development of a comprehensive strategy rather than the piecemeal activity we have been able to fund in the past. Current concern over the Funding Council's ability to sustain funded growth however raises the spectre of a return to the 'bad old days' where short-termism was the only option available.

It is also true that aspects of adult education which do not benefit from FEFC funding have not been able to develop to the same extent. The split between 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' adult education enshrined in the FHE Act(1992) created for many of us a totally artificial divide. In order to survive we have had to learn the skills to operate in the new arena but, whilst it undoubtedly contains many opportunities, there are also threats. The Local Authority funding base continues to support non

vocational programmes in adult education centres and community schools, but this will always be vulnerable to cuts and changes in policy. There may be other external funding opportunities, but these will all have their own strings attached.

The time is long overdue for a coherent approach to the funding of adult education in its totality. This needs to be linked to a strengthened statutory role for Local Authorities, one which acknowledges the crucial importance of community-based learning initiatives not only to achieve individual skills and qualifications, but to support personal and social development, and link with community-based strategies for economic regeneration. The strengths of women's education programmes must be integral to this approach.

Accreditation

Experience of working with women, many of whom are following a formal study programme for the first time since leaving school, confirms the belief that learning pathways for adults must continue to contain space for a multiplicity of outcomes. These may be qualification-related, and individually focused, but are not necessarily so.

There needs to be an honest appraisal of the range of outcomes possible within Local Authority adult education, and a celebration of a diversity of approaches. A great deal of our staff time and energy in recent years has gone into developing accreditation, and this has often been extremely positive. We have aimed to ensure that accreditation is not imposed, but can be developed alongside students, where possible in negotiation with them. This explains why in Rochdale we have often opted for Open College Network accreditation as a curriculum development tool, and have designed a number of new OCN courses (eg. basic skills, childcare training, women's studies, counselling skills).

Ever since Open College Networks began in the 1980's, many women's education courses nation-wide have submitted themselves to scrutiny by applying for accreditation. As designers, deliverers and managers of

such programmes we know that all our courses - not just those which have formal accreditation - seek to provide an access point to more advanced study. Therefore it feels wrong that the FEFC should interpret eligibility for 'Schedule 2 (d)' funding in the strict terms that it does [FEFC, 1995].

Individual versus group approaches

The feminist cliche that 'the personal is the political' points to an important value underpinning women's education; namely the collective sense of empowerment that can arise when a group of women begin to make connections between their individual experiences and those shared with other women. There is a danger that the current emphasis on accreditation will only promote individual attainment, often within a competitive environment. It is important to resist this move, and to seek ways to work actively with women in groups; the self-confidence and power that can come from this process has been a central part of the learning process both within radical adult education as a whole, and in women's education in particular. The importance of women-only provision cannot be underestimated, and it is vital that space is continued to be available for this work.

Jane Thompson writes of 'the kind of knowledge that supports women, in the company of others, in the business of transforming our lives. The kind of knowledge that shifts the emphasis from victims to survivors. From customers to activists. From impotence to creative anger'. It feels important to ensure that we do not abandon either approach, that both individual and collective strategies together can continue to co-exist. This is difficult to achieve within the current climate, but a combined focus on the individual and the collective must be an integral part of policies and planning.

Conclusion

Some may criticise the examples selected here, which, at first sight, appear to reinforce traditional stereotypes: women as office workers, as mothers, as carers for children. The examples of work described are but some contributions to the full range of possibilities contained within women's education programmes. Women's education has always sought to start where women are, and to empower women to progress from that point. It is vital to seek ways of making women's voices heard in local policy making arenas, where issues relating to childcare, parenting and the family are extremely important; and to ensure there is a strong woman-centred strand to community-based strategies for economic regeneration. Adult learning strategies within a Local Authority context have a critical role to play in making this happen.

147

References

McGivney, Veronica, NIACE, 1994
Wasted Potential: Training and Career Progression for Part-Time and Temporary Workers

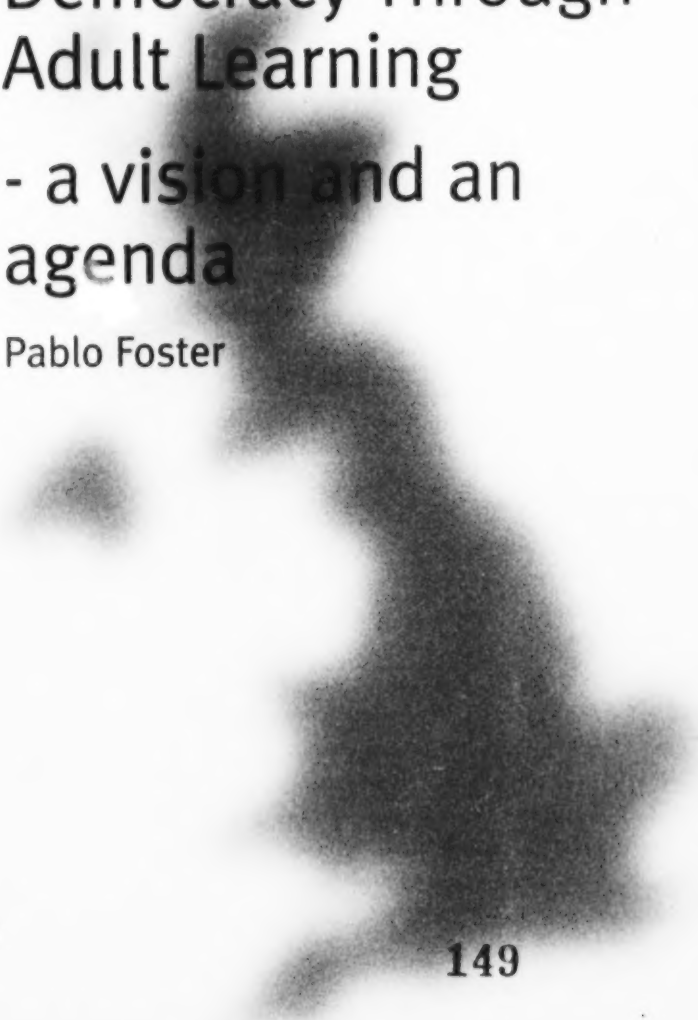
FEFC Circular 95/32, para 33-34; issued 31 October 1995

Thompson, Jane, NIACE, 1995
'Feminism and Women's Education: All Equal Now?', in Adult Learning, Critical Intelligence and Social Change, ed Mayo and Thompson

Empowerment & Democracy Through Adult Learning

- a vision and an agenda

Pablo Foster



149

The public sector in general - and local government in particular - have been involved in profound changes since 1979, the date when the government made a commitment to promoting the market as a sole organising principle for the economy and society. In support of that policy, financial and employment systems and procedures have been deregulated, while tight central auditing has grown to weaken and limit options at the local authority level. The tax and welfare systems have been re-designed to encourage 'enterprise' and punish 'idleness'. Throughout all public and private services state regulatory intervention has ostensibly been rolled back, and market forces promoted.

The impact of this market driven policy thrust has been particularly disruptive of coherence for democratic local government and community structures trying to deliver education and training programmes for adults. At the same time the welfare of the poorer sections of society has been undermined, while wider and more permanent unemployment has paradoxically reduced enterprise and led to higher social security spending, with increased demand on these local services. Instead of long term programmes to raise the skill-levels of a redundant low-skill population, there have been numerous short-term interventions by a range of government agencies. Instead of allowing people to re-equip themselves through full-time training, they have been obliged to restrict themselves to part-time education or training in order to be available for largely part-time jobs. Many older workers have been demoralised into leaving the workforce at the earliest opportunity, with a consequent tax loss to the Exchequer. [In addition, government coffers have lost £9 billion through income tax cuts at the higher levels; £13 billion through the sale of public assets below full market cost; £3 billion for the cost of switching from domestic rates, to the 'poll-tax', and back to council charges.] The higher paid have been offered incentives to make the market work, the lower paid have been offered insecurity, unemployment and benefit hurdles. For many people, the experience of social alienation has moved them on to exclusion from any truly participative citizenship. Shadow economies linked with crime, drugs

and violence flourish where the formal economy fails, and offer their own routes to alternative skills and rewards.

Government policy on education has steadily shifted assets and services away from local authorities: first the polytechnics, then the Further Education colleges, along with their "vocational funding", and latterly the nibbles at the school sector. The funding for Higher and Further Education has been routed through non-elected quangos, which dispense funding with a mix of stiff growth targets, reduced budgets and competitive incentives. In the Further Education sector, there has been a drive to extend the accreditation of all vocational, and many non-vocational, courses, with unfortunate results for many local services, which now find themselves competing with subsidised college offers and having to charge at an economic rate. However, the damage to local authority services in many areas has been amplified because their education departments have been so preoccupied with school loyalty and school funding that they have neglected their statutory responsibilities to adult education and training. The exceptions occur where such responsibilities have been given a high profile or have been linked more powerfully with the 'gears' of economic and social development.

For all local authority adult and community education and training services, core SSA derived budgets have been eroded. Many traditional client groups, particularly those enjoying their 'third or fourth' age, find themselves excluded by the loss of remission, the rise in fees, or the requirements for assessment or 'progression'. In some boroughs, for example, the former I.L.E.A. boroughs, the participation decline has been spectacularly sad. In others, it is a steady haemorrhage, because experienced part-time tutors have given up, or centres have been 'rationalised' or local transport withdrawn. Attempts to comply with client-provider splits, with compulsory competitive tendering and a reduced workforce have led to many local services adopting a flat agency structure, shedding experienced but 'expensive' managers to effect savings, then delegating management responsibilities as far

'down' as already flat structures allow, usually to new short-term contracted or part-time posts. [This process, co inciding with a drive for quality improvements and customer-oriented, charter controlled services, has also led to a rise in reported stress.] Thus, a steady demoralisation of services has parallelled the disappearance of managers with a strategic role for the coherence of provision for adults. At local or even regional level, no authority or agency or person has real statutory responsibility (and resources) for coherent strategic planning of the learning/education/training/development opportunities required to meet individual, family, community or locality needs. The policy challenge to the post war consensus that collective needs are met by a collective state, implemented through local institutions and services, financed by public taxation, seems to have been successful in the years since 1979, driving the market into education and training for adults. Whether it has been successful in meeting the needs of the people is another issue.

At a time when the UK's learning needs are recognised by all parties to be woefully unmet in the face of international competition, one of the most effective sectors in reaching adults, ie local authority adult and community education, has been marginalised and weakened by central government (and often also by a bias towards schools in its own education department) to the detriment of the development needs of the very tax and charge payers who sustain both tiers of government.

National Government has rightly recognised that our ability to learn is the one faculty that can enable us to meet the challenges for change that the UK now faces. The national strategic planning framework is promoted through components like the following:

152

CHART 1: THE COMPETITIVENESS CHALLENGE

Aims for a learning Society

(Training Targets)

Lifetime Learning

(DfEE Consultation)

The Learning Organisation

(Investors in People)

The Learning Providers

HEFC/FEFC Funding Formulae / Concessions

The Learning Staff

(Employee Development Schemes)

Learners at large } *16-25*
Employed
Self-motivated, self financed

However, learning in the U.K. is currently something adults do informally for themselves. For Britain genuinely to become a 'learning society' and meet the competitiveness challenge we need to work back from where and how adults actually learn, and build on those agencies who are in touch with 'non-participating' adults. For a start, we would need young adults to have a positive experience of early learning, with the kind of resources and support enjoyed by private schools. Next, we would need a model that builds support and progression from where all adults are, and values all applications of learning. It would contrast with Chart 1.

Chart 2: Learning as an Agent of Transformation	
Learners	*In whatever context valuing a range of outcomes*
Learning groups	*Valuing individuals and collective outcomes*
Learning families	*Valuing social outcomes*
Learning networks	*Valuing common outcomes*
Learning communities	*Valuing personal, collective, social, economic and environmental outcomes*
Learning organisations	*Valuing personal, collective, social, economic and environmental outcomes*
Learning support agencies	*Valuing all ways of supporting above*

This model would begin to tackle some of the issues any government would be up against when trying to mobilise learners in the UK:

- the unhappy and dissuading experiences of formal education many people report
- the narrow spectrum of types of intelligence and learning outcomes much formal education is now obliged to recognise
- the non-participation of large segments of the adult population in the UK
- the over-preoccupation with exams and intimidating forms of assessment which act as a de-motivating factor for many adults, etc.

For learners to become active transformers of our society we need to help the majority of people:

- see that learning is something they actually do, and can do better
- see that evidence of learning appears when it is applied ~ whether as knowledge, understanding, skills or attitudes, or even abstention
- see that learning links with problem-solving, situation changing, income generating actions, etc
- value a wide variety of learning outcomes ~ both individually and collectively
- experience widening circles of collective action bringing about the kind of community/society to which they aspire.

The elements of this model already exist, and local authorities continue to be best placed to support it, however insecure their situation or patchy their achievements. For a start, local authorities enjoy a rich variety of relationships with the people who live in their area as their:

- Voters/Councillors
- Charge payers
- Service users / clients / students / recommenders / customers
- Employees / Service providers
- Volunteers / Gift workers
- Supporters / Activists, etc

These relationships are expressed in and through a wide range of variously described services:

- Education [Schools, Youth, Community, Family and Adult]
- Libraries and Galleries
- Social Services
- Recreational Services
- Housing

- Health and Safety
- Economic Development
- Policy and Planning, etc

All these services (whether still directly delivered, contracted out, franchised or delegated) have strands of work that involve learning/education/training activities in relation to adults.

If all these 'departments' and all these 'human resource development' strands were focussing on common objectives: - to raise local skill levels, to encourage participation, to value the quality of local life, to develop social and economic activity, to improve or safeguard the quality of the environments, etc - then the kind of learning support envisaged in Chart 2 might be realised, and the problems of cuts in currently competing local services might be mitigated.

In many local authorities partnerships between services are bringing about piecemeal this kind of learning-centred development service. Local authorities are the only agents who might achieve coherence of education and development for all the people in a locality. Certainly, corporate colleges who are driven to compete cannot provide for everybody who might benefit. Their primary funding source of necessity (perhaps by design) drives them towards young people with vocational needs who can attend full-time or substantial part-time courses.

A local authority can deliver locally while developing the multiple use of premises "fit for such purposes". They can develop one-stop information and guidance services that meet the needs of all their customers and all their services, so that information and opportunities can be networked out into every community, using I.T. and locally trained expertise. Staff and volunteers can take advantage of staff development opportunities across all services (and be funded for it), train up necessary local support and access each other's information resources. Sources of funding can be jointly explored, collateral pooled for bids, and projects 'keystoned' into several sources of funding, so reducing dependency on any one source. Services need not compete for

CHART 3: POTENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR AN AUTHORITY-WIDE SERVICE

Service	Activity	Expertise	Sites	Learners	Funds
Eduaction & Training [& Guidance?]	5-16 Learning 16-19 Learning Post 19 Learning Lifelong learning	Support Staff Teachers Tutors Admin. I.T. Managers	Schools Centres (AE, Youth, Community, etc.) Offices Outreach	Schoolchildren Adults, Youth F.T. & P.T. Staff Volunteers	Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) FEFC, HEFC, ESF, TECs Section 11, etc.
Libraries & Galleries [& Guidance?]	Information and Guidance Family literacy Open Learning Arts and Crafts etc Training	Staff Experts Support staff	Libraries Mobile Vehicles Galleries Stores, etc	Users Subscribers "Friends" Visitors/Tourists Staff/Volunteers	S.S.A. British Library Assoc. Trusts Foundations Sponsors
Social Services and Health	Campaigns Pre-school learning Special needs learning Housebound Centres for Elderly etc Reminiscence Groups Training	Trainers Support Staff Specialists Managers etc	Centres Offices	Users Staff Volunteers	S.S.A. Care in Community, etc Contracts from Health Trusts
Housing	Tenant Education Campaigns	Staff Specialists Trainers	Offices Empty Premises Estates facilities	Tenants Staff	S.S.A.
Economic Development	Forward planning information Training and Development Awareness raising and briefings etc	Specialists Support Staff	Offices	Staff	S.S.A. E.S.F. SRB TECs etc

contracts but combine their bidding to ensure them. Individuals can pool their networks, so wider use can be made of the authority's human resources (see Chart 3).

More importantly, all services can converge on key development aims for their authority, drawing on thier collective knowledge and experience of communities, and be seen as genuinely working on behalf of the electorate and residents. It is a transparent opportunity for a new pact between the electorate and the elected.

New information technology presents a new means for empowering people with knowledge. Dudley, for example, is showing how homes can, through terminals in local schools, have access to the Internet via cable networks. Councils will be able to consult with household members on issues, and voters will be able to communicate their wishes and aims by E-mail. It will become easier to network who knows what, who is doing what, who shares an issue, an aspiration or a solution. Libraries, for example, get a new lease of life as access points for electronic information, as venues for family literacy, as local issue discussion venues, or "cyber cafés".

Within the range of local authority services are professionals who can empower people with skills across a wide spectrum of local needs. Many of them may live within the authority, even when no longer employed directly. The adult education and training service is an ideal focus for meeting in-house training needs across services as well as assembling the people or agencies who will meet skills, deficits within the area, stimulating local solutions and the local economy by using local expertise. In developing provision, for example, for people over 60, or over 75, or over 85, a wide range of services need to combine to create affordable interventions which encourage continuing independence on the part of older residents through activities which stimulate social interaction, meet health and medical needs, and keep up with 'later learning' needs like what to do in place of drug dependency. Initiatives in Northamptonshire, and elsewhere, are exploring this self-reliance within a "learning communities" model.

All these experiments in hard pressed local authorities are trying to actualise what services might look like for Empowered Citizens rather than Disappointed Customers. Resources will be tight, the adult curriculum debatable, yet the need for everyone in the locality to hang together, rather than separately, will be all the more crucial if any kind of social inclusion is to be realised. If people are encouraged to participate, to take ownership, then an enormous resource is released - gift work. This is the time that people donate to things that they care about – whether informally as neighbour, friend, or local activist, or formally as a volunteer, an aide, an unpaid worker. In a society with such enormous human wastage, through unemployment, early "retirement", exclusion, giftwork is a dominant resource. Local authority services are best placed to rouse and focus this latent energy because they can relate to what people care about — their chance to work and participate, their families, their homes, their health and well-being, their environment, their social recreational and economic activities — all those things, in fact, which led to the growth of local authority services just over one hundred years ago. The current transformations present us with a new challenge to re-invigorate democracy through learning to be participative citizens.

Many schools have developed consultative processes with families, and many community adult education services have formed ways of involving local communities in planning and budgeting processes. Most services have consultative forums with their clients/customers/ users. Communication through such vehicles is normally two way: for information to pass about needs and satisfaction one way, and for information about intentions and responses to radiate in the opposite direction. All these mechanisms of involvement could be extended to identify learning needs, involve all parties interested in meeting them, and lead to joint, focussed interventions, by service and community, that would enable a locality to realise its aspirations as much through human resources as through cash. Funding would be available — from a services pool, from a local development bank, from employers and from local people's contributions. It would be like a credit union on an

authority wide scale, a Local Learning and Development Bank, dedicated to democratic renewal through active citizenship.

Further Education
Development Agency

ISSN 0 - 907659 - 94 - 2

Price £12.00

BEST COPY AVAILABLE